

COUNTER-RADICALIZATION: COMBATING TERRORISM AT THE CORE  
A STUDY OF THE MOTIVATIONS AND INSPIRATIONAL LEADERS BEHIND  
RADICALIZATION TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND THE PROGRAMS  
DESIGNED TO COMBAT THEM

by  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Radicalization to violent extremism is a critical threat to both national and global security. This thesis examines three aspects of radicalization to violent Islamic extremism and the related counter-radicalization efforts. The first chapter examines what motivations prompt women to radicalize to violent extremism and analyzes the applicability of several leading theories on motivations to four Western female case studies. In this chapter, I hypothesized that the women would exhibit motivations related more to political and religious drivers due to the relatively conflict-free setting and neutral gender roles in the West; however, the results indicate trauma/secondary traumatization and the associated revenge are significant motivators, and uniquely female motivations to restore honor should not be disregarded as a possible motive. The second chapter explores the characteristics that make leaders influential and critical to the radicalization process through a case study analysis of Abdullah Azzam and Anwar al-Awlaki. I theorized that these leaders would demonstrate charisma, effective communication, and credibility despite being deceased, which the case study analysis confirmed with the exception of Azzam's lack of cultural resonance. Using a case study comparison of three programs with different structures, the final chapter assesses whether a government connection has a negative impact on counter-radicalization programs, and if the type of government involved influences how the connection is perceived. I hypothesized that a government connection, particularly with a Western secular government, would negatively impact a program's legitimacy. However, the case study results indicate that an apparent connection between the messengers and the government negatively impacts program legitimacy, not simply a government connection to the program as a whole. Also, the

case study results reveal the type of government involved does have an impact when a connection is evident between the messengers and the government. Each of the chapters addresses policy implications related to counter-radicalization and specifically effective communication of a counter narrative.

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## INTRODUCTION

Terrorism and the violent extremist groups behind terrorism pose one of the foremost threats to global security today. President Barack Obama recently stated, “For the foreseeable future, the most direct threat to America at home and abroad remains terrorism.”<sup>1</sup> The terrorist threat is evident from the homegrown and international attacks that have struck on Western soil – the Boston Marathon bombing, the Fort Hood shooting – to the spread of Al Qaeda affiliates internationally, to the European struggle to stop individuals leaving to fight with extremists in Syria, to the attack on the Kenyan Westgate Mall, and to the escalating attacks of Boko Haram in Nigeria. These are just a few examples of the terrorist threat in recent history with a focus on violent Islamic extremism, which is the concentration of this analysis but is not the only form of extremism posing a threat. Given the prominence of terrorism as a global and national threat to security, it is critical to understand the radicalization process that precedes violent extremism and ultimately leads to terrorist attacks and to develop counter-radicalization efforts to stop the spread of violent extremism.

Radicalization, a highly debated topic, does not have an established or standard definition.<sup>2</sup> However, it is often defined as an individualized and complex process through which individuals are exposed to an ideology and transition from what is

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Landler, “Obama Warns U.S. Faces Diffuse Terrorism Threats,” *The New York Times*, May 28, 2014, accessed June 18, 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/29/us/politics/obama-foreign-policy-west-point-speech.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias&>

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Vidino, “Countering Radicalization in America,” USIP Special Report, November 2010, 1, 3. accessed July 18, 2014. [http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR262%20%20Countering\\_Radicalization\\_in\\_America.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR262%20%20Countering_Radicalization_in_America.pdf)

considered mainstream and conventional ideas to an extreme set of beliefs and ideas.<sup>3</sup>

Radicalization includes both personal and structural factors, as well as a number of other components, including root causes and strains, ideology, and mobilization/socialization with a likeminded group.<sup>4</sup> No single component or factor can explain radicalization, and no single profile or path exists to explain those that radicalize.

Radicalization ranges from *cognitive* - operating within legal means and limited to ideas - to *violent* - accepting violence as a legitimate means to accomplish extremist goals.<sup>5</sup> Extremism is the end result of the radicalization process, and violent extremism is the acceptance and engagement in violent action as a result of radical, or extreme, views.<sup>6</sup> Violent extremism is then often equated with terrorism or terrorism can be considered the step when action is taken or supported. Radicalization to violent extremism often is the focus of counter-radicalization efforts designed to stop terrorism.

The issue of radicalization is important in a globalized world where people from around the world are connected and share ideas, particularly via social media and the internet. The increased connectivity makes it more likely that an individual will be exposed at some point to an extremist ideology - by chance or choice, and also facilitates the exchange of information and propaganda and socialization with other extremists.

These are important factors to take into account for countering radicalization to violence.

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<sup>3</sup> Royal Canadian Mounted Police, National Security Criminal Investigations, *Radicalization: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Canada, June 2009, 1. As referenced in Jerome P. Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combatting a Complex Threat," *Congressional Research Service*, January 23, 2013, 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Vidino, "Countering Radicalization in America," 3; Peter Neumann, "Combating Violent Extremism: The Counterradicalization Debate in 2011," *The Washington Institute Policy Analysis* 1738. January 7, 2011. Accessed July 19, 2014. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/combating-violent-extremism-the-counterradicalization-debate-in-2011>

<sup>5</sup> Vidino, "Countering Radicalization in America," 1.

<sup>6</sup> Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combatting a Complex Threat," 12.



In the United States, efforts to counter radicalization to violent extremism are relatively new and underdeveloped. The 9/11 Commission Report discusses efforts to prevent the growth of Islamist Terrorism, including engaging in the “struggle of ideas,” and engaging in a preventive strategy that incorporates political aspects.<sup>7</sup> Although some efforts and programs to counter radicalization have existed since 2001, it was not until 2011 that the White House released a formal strategy, “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States.”<sup>8</sup> United States’ efforts to counter-radicalization are still developing and evolving, and there are improvements that can be made as studies further the understanding of radicalization.

The overarching theme for this paper is radicalization to violent Islamic extremism with an emphasis on understanding and enhancing those counter-violent extremism (CVE) or preventing violent extremism (PVE) efforts designed to combat or counter radicalization and undermine the terrorist narrative. By understanding and potentially stopping or slowing radicalization, the source of terrorism would be greatly undermined. Exploring radicalization and creating effective and legitimate counter-radicalization programs and policies has gained new importance in the United States as terrorist attacks have continued to strike closer to the homeland, and in some cases, the attacks are carried out by United States citizens. This paper aims to further the study of radicalization to violent extremism with a focus on the implications for Western governments, specifically the United States.

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<sup>7</sup> National Commission on Terrorism Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report*, July 22, 2004, 364, 375. Accessed July 18, 2014. <http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> “Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States,” The White House, August 2011. Accessed July 18, 2014. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering\\_local\\_partners.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/empowering_local_partners.pdf)

Beyond the central theme of radicalization and counter-radicalization, I chose to explore topics because of their role in communication and messaging, both of which have a great impact on the success and the effectiveness of CVE efforts, and therefore the success of countering radicalization. Specifically, this paper studies female motivations to radicalize to violent extremism, characteristics of some of the most prominent inspirational leaders of violent Islamic extremism, and the impact of a government connection on a counter-radicalization program. Each chapter investigates understudied areas and cases, or offers a new analysis and methodology for previously studied topics to produce new information and insights.

The subjects of each chapter relate directly to communicating a message effectively and with credibility to undermine the terrorist narrative and propaganda. I chose to study the motivations that prompt females to radicalize to violent extremism because terrorist groups use motivations to recruit individuals; therefore, these motivations should be used to inform counter-radicalization programs in order to stop these recruitment efforts with an alternate message and to maintain awareness of the audience. The characteristics of inspirational terrorist leaders were chosen because these leaders have found success in encouraging individuals to act on their radical beliefs, primarily through the use of propaganda and their ability to communicate and connect to these individuals. The study of leaders provides knowledge on communication styles, content for messaging, and how to establish credibility and attract or connect with an audience. Finally, the structure of existing counter-radicalization programs was explored because there are lessons that can be learned from the success and failure of other

programs and how they were constructed to communicate their message and because the analysis provides information into how to establish credibility.

### **The Female Front**

The first chapter examines the question what motivations prompt women to radicalize to violent extremism. This chapter reviews the scholarly literature on female motivations and from the literature, it establishes three main categories of motivations: political, religious, and personal. The analysis breaks down the personal motivations category into more detail and includes: trauma and secondary traumatization, revenge and grief, regaining honor and reinforcing gender roles, and struggling for equality to break from traditional roles. Particular attention is paid to those personal motivations that are unique to females, specifically regaining female honor/reinforcing gender roles and the opposing motivation described as struggling for equality and a break from traditional roles.<sup>9</sup>

Using a case study analysis, the chapter assesses the applicability of the leading theories on female motivations to four individual cases of Western female radicalization. Western female case studies were selected because they are an under studied population in the subject area and because they have the potential to truly test the established theories on motivations, which were founded mainly using select case study populations like the Palestinian female suicide bombers and the Chechen Black Widows. The individual case studies explored in this analysis are Muriel Degauque, Roshonara

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<sup>9</sup> While regaining honor is not a uniquely female motivation on a broader and more general level, the subject of this chapter is regaining *female* honor, specifically female purity and honor related to the ability to fulfill traditional societal roles as mothers and wives.

Choudhry, Malika El Aroud, and Colleen LaRose. News articles, court documents, media interviews, and police documents are assessed to determine the existence of or evidence for the leading theories on female motivations.

Based on a review of the literature, I anticipated that Western case studies would exhibit more political and religious motivations than personal because the West is stable and is not experiencing war violence at home and because Western women typically have a greater level of equality and freedom. I also expected to find that the uniquely feminine motivations to radicalize would not be present in the Western case studies due to this greater level of equality and absence of rigid roles.

The case study results challenged what would be expected based on the literature review on motivations. The Western cases possessed prominent personal motivations similar to those cases based in conflict settings with traditional, limited roles for women, for example the Chechens and Palestinians. The findings demonstrate the importance of personal motivations in the radicalization process, particularly the role of trauma/secondary traumatization and the desire for revenge stemming from traumatization. Perhaps more intriguing, some of the Western case studies exhibited signs consistent with the theory on restoration of female honor, which is a theory primarily associated with case studies and populations with more traditional and strict norms and roles for women in society. This chapter offers additional insight into the study of female motivations to radicalize to violent extremism and provides information that can be used to inform policy to prevent and counter Western female radicalization, specifically what motivations terrorist propaganda are exploiting to encourage individuals to act.

## **Battle for Influence**

The second chapter examines inspirational leaders within violent Islamic extremist groups and the role these leaders play in the radicalization process and ultimately in the survival of the group. This chapter assesses what characteristics leaders of violent Islamic extremism possess that make them influential and inspirational regardless of the time and place in which they operate, including after death. Through a review of the literature on leadership, both of violent extremist leaders and leadership more broadly, three characteristics were chosen for analysis: charisma, effective communication, and credibility or authority. Criteria for each characteristic were established using the reviewed literature. Based on a review of the literature, I argue that inspirational leaders should exhibit these three characteristics regardless of the time or place in which they are operating, even after their death.

This chapter assesses the identified characteristics and the applicability of each using a structured, focused case study comparison of two inspirational leaders within violent Islamic extremism - Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah Azzam. These two case studies were selected because each leader is deceased and has been cited as a source of influence in a recent attack conducted by a Western violent extremist. The cases were also selected because the two individuals are considered influential to the current violent Islamic extremist ideology and activity. Since the methodology is a structured, focused case study comparison, each case is examined using questions based on the literature review and with the intent to provide the same information for each case to enable comparison. News articles, interviews, biographies and the writings, speeches, and other

materials (e.g. YouTube videos, magazine pieces) of each leader were reviewed for the analysis.

The assessment found that both leaders generally adhere to the criteria for each characteristic, particularly for charisma and credibility or authority, but the Azzam case study strays from the tenets on effective communication for a modern audience, despite his resonance with a modern audience. This departure from the literature raises questions on whether the material is being repackaged and tailored to a modern audience or if the other characteristics are more important in connecting with followers. The findings of the case study analysis have important policy implications for countering these leaders, particularly related to targeted killings and countering or preventing violent extremism efforts. The analysis provides information on *how* CVE materials might be communicated to resonate and establish credibility with an audience and *what* types of information should be included, for example, to establish credibility. The findings also indicate that targeted killings will have limited success against inspirational leaders unless paired with an effort to address the enduring materials and message of the leader.

### **Blame The Messenger**

The final chapter explores the question of whether or not a close and evident government connection negatively impacts a counter-radicalization program's relationship with the intended audience, and if the type of government involved influences how the connection is perceived. This chapter assesses the literature on the impact a government connection can have on counter-radicalization efforts and the varying types of messengers that are considered credible to the intended audience.

A review of the literature found that the existing studies of counter-radicalization programs failed to examine if it might be the construction of the program's connection to the government and the type of government that impact the program's legitimacy. This chapter addresses those gaps in the literature and examines credible messenger types. Based on the existing literature and the established gaps, it was hypothesized that a counter-radicalization program's legitimacy is negatively impacted when there is a clear and evident connection between the program and the government, particularly if it is a Western secular government.

Using a structured, focused case comparison, this chapter examines three case studies that possess varying program structures and are set within different forms of government (i.e. democracy v. governed by Islamic law). The three case studies under review are: Quilliam in Great Britain, the Dialogue Forum in Denmark, and the Sakinah Campaign in Saudi Arabia. As stated above, standardized questions were established as part of the structured, focused case study methodology, and each case study was examined using the questions to collect the same information and to enable comparison.

The case study analysis findings supported the hypothesis in some ways, but also clarified that it is the evident connection between the government and the *messengers* that negatively impacts a program. The findings also confirmed that the type of government involved does have an impact on the credibility of a program when the government connection to the messengers is evident. I was not able to control for the messenger type among the case studies, but I was able to determine two options that are effective and the structure of the programs that maintain their effectiveness. These findings are important to the improvement of United States CVE programs, specifically the structure of those

programs. Government sponsored programs have the potential to maintain credibility if the program is structured to distance the program's messengers from the government or to conceal the connection.



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**CHAPTER 1 –**  
**THE FEMALE FRONT: IMPETUSES TO EMBRACE VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

Women have historically been involved in violent extremist organizations; however, since the early 2000s, women have become increasingly more visible and more active as actors, recruiters, and supporters in violent extremist groups, particularly in Islamic extremism.<sup>10</sup> The importance of women in violent extremist groups is increasingly evident as news surfaces of females traveling to support extremist groups on the Syrian front, as the Pakistani Taliban releases statements indicating that they have trained hundreds of female suicide bombers, and as internal Al Qaeda arguments emerge on the role of females in jihad.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, propaganda directed at women, such as *al-Khansaa*, and web forums with increased female activity have prompted scholars to

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<sup>10</sup>Bill Roggio. "Taliban use females in recent suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan." *The Long War Journal*. June 26, 2011; Cindy Ness, "Introduction," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. by Cindy Ness (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2-3; Mia Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," *Gender Issues* 28 (2011): 1-2, accessed February 1, 2014, doi: 10.1007/s12147-011-9098-z; Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26(2003), 171,173, accessed February 16,2014, doi: 10.1080/10576100390211419; Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006), 467, accessed February 1, 2014. doi: 10.1080/10576100600698550; Huma Yusuf, "Female Suicide Bombings in Iraq: Why the Recent Surge?" *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 8, 2008; Katharina Von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict* 30 (2007): 398, accessed February 16, 2014, doi: 10.1080/10576100701258585. In *Bombshells: Women and Terror*, Mia Bloom states "the percentage of women since 2002 in some countries exceeds as much as fifty percent of the operatives (2)." Cindy Ness puts this percentage closer to thirty percent, specifically for secular groups (2). Neither author references a dataset for independent verification, but the trend and general agreement on the increase holds.

<sup>11</sup> Miranda Prynne, "Women Seek al-Qaeda Fighter Husbands in Syria Online," *The Telegraph*, January 20, 2014, accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/10583393/Women-look-for-al-Qaeda-fighter-husbands-in-Syria-online.html>; CBS News, "Women Fight for Right to Join Al Qaeda," May 31, 2008, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/women-fight-for-right-to-join-al-qaeda/>; Huda Al-Saleh, "The Women of Al-Qaeda," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, January 5, 2014, accessed July 21, 2014. <http://www.aawsat.net/2014/01/article55326613>; Augustine Anthony, "Pakistan Taliban has 500 Suicide Bombers, Cleric Says," *Bloomberg News*, February 10, 2014, accessed August 10, 2014. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-09/pakistan-taliban-readies-500-female-suicide-bombers-cleric-says.html>. This statement could be purely propaganda and exaggerations for the peace negotiations, but it still illustrates that Islamic extremist groups have embraced the inclusion of women, as do the examples of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

begin examining female involvement and to call for more research.<sup>12</sup> Academic researchers and government officials increasingly recognize that female radicalization is an important aspect of understanding and addressing radicalization and violent extremism more broadly; the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has acknowledged this issue and recommended additional radicalization research specific to women to inform future policy.<sup>13</sup> While terrorism and radicalization are widely studied, there are fewer sources that specifically focus on female radicalization and participation in violent extremism, particularly for females that play roles outside of suicide bombers or that live outside of certain conflict zones.<sup>14</sup>

In this chapter, I assess the motivations that prompt women to radicalize to violent extremism. I review several proposed hypotheses on female motivations to violent extremism, and I determine the applicability of these hypotheses to cases of Western females engaged in violent Islamic extremism, specifically the cases of Muriel Degauque, Roshonara Choudhry, Malika El Aroud, and Colleen LaRose. This is a case study group currently missing from the literature on female radicalization because there are fewer Western cases to study and because most scholars focus on concentrated groups with similar environments or conflict settings, like the Palestinian women, the Chechens, and the Tamil Tigers. Since women often hold very different places and roles from men in the societies where violent extremism is prevalent and because extremist groups have taken

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<sup>12</sup> CBS News. "Women Fight for Right to Join Al Qaeda;" Von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," 406-408; Lindsey O'Rourke, "What's Special About Female Suicide Terrorism?" *Security Studies* 18(2009), 681, accessed February 1, 2014. doi:10.1080/09636410903369084; K. Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 93.

<sup>13</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Women and Terrorist Radicalization Final Report." February 2013, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Naureen Chowdhury Fink and Rafia Barakat, "Strengthening Community Resilience against Violence and Extremism," *Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation*, November 2013, 4; Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 6.

the step to customize propaganda for women, there is reason to believe that women have motivations that are different enough from men to warrant specific research. Many of the hypotheses for female radicalization are very specific to a woman's place in society, and it is necessary to test these theories against cases from the West where women are expected to hold a more equal role and status in society. This research on female motivations is critical for better understanding radicalization and for formulating more effective and comprehensive policies, both domestically and in foreign policy.

The following chapter is composed of six main sections, beginning with an assessment of the theories on female motivations to engage in violent extremism. The second section describes the case study methodology employed in the analysis of female motivations, and the third section examines each of the case studies in depth with a focus on the applicability of the established theories. The case study analyses are followed by an examination of the findings that many of the established theories are applicable to Western case studies and a discussion of how the applicable theories might impact policy. I conclude with final thoughts and future research questions on female radicalization.

### **Female Radicalization throughout the Literature**

Many theories exist on why females radicalize to violent extremism for different causes and groups, ranging from secular and nationalist groups to religious-based groups. There is no single overarching reason or motivation to explain why women radicalize, and it would be overly simplistic and inaccurate to attempt to create a single profile. Three overarching categories on motivations are found throughout the literature: religious, political, and personal. Individuals often have several different motivations working in

combination, with no single motivation or type dominating the decision to radicalize and act.<sup>15</sup>

Varying schools of thought exist on the extent to which men and women share motivations to engage in violent extremism. One body of literature on female radicalization argues that men and women generally hold similar motivations when radicalizing to violent extremism.<sup>16</sup> The scholars within this school of thought range from those who argue that females hold group level political and religious motivations to those that contend both sexes share similar personal motivations. Cunningham contends that both sexes are active in violent extremist organizations for the same primary reasons, mainly for political purposes, and she indicates that emphasizing personal motivations “diminishes women’s credibility and influence.”<sup>17</sup> O’Rourke states that both females and males share the same “general motives” with both motivated by a profound commitment to their community, but the differences are revealed in how a particular extremist group ties the political motivations of the group to personal experiences during female recruitment.<sup>18</sup> Speckhard asserts that motivations typically differ based on the environment – conflict vs. non-conflict zone – not the gender of the individual.<sup>19</sup> Most

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<sup>15</sup> Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 162; Yoni Figchel, “Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Female Suicide Bombers,” International Institute for Counter-Terrorism. October 6, 2003, accessed February 16, 2014. <http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/167/Default.aspx>; Bloom, “Bombshells: Women and Terror,” 11; Paige Whaley Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists*, (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 23, 210.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham, “Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism,” 186; O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” 681.

<sup>17</sup> Cunningham, “Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism,” 171, 186.

<sup>18</sup> O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” 681-682, 684, 701.

<sup>19</sup> Anne Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31(2008): 1030, 1032-1033, accessed February 1, 2014. Doi: 10.1080/10576100802408121. - Speckhard groups different sets of motivations together based on conflict zones and non-conflict zones. Those in conflict zones are in a group with nationalistic, trauma and revenge motivations; whereas those in non-conflict zones fit into motivations of marginalization, desire for identity and meaning, secondary traumatization and redemption. Speckhard also argues that women are less likely to fall within the second group. I treat all of these as most of these as personal motivations that can obviously act in combination,

authors within this school acknowledge that it is not as simple as stating the motivations are the same or different because both sexes have personal and political and/or religious motivations for their actions.<sup>20</sup>

Some scholars recognize that personal factors exist and can be unique to females.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean that personal factors are the overriding and singular motivation for these authors, but they recognize there are differences. The personal motivations include: revenge, redemption/regaining honor related to societal norms, equality and freedom from traditional roles, and trauma.<sup>22</sup>

A final school of thought contends that personal motivations are the primary factors that cause women to embrace violence, particularly for suicide missions.<sup>23</sup> In fact, some of these scholars argue that women have more personal reasons for participating in violent extremism than men.<sup>24</sup> Scholars within this school are primarily focusing on Palestinian female suicide bombers. For example, Schweitzer conducted personal interviews with failed attackers and found the stated motivations change from personal

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but I do not find it to be as clearly defined in these groups; therefore, I analyze them separately in how applicable they are to the study of female motivations.

<sup>20</sup> Mia Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimizers*, May 11, 2007, accessed August 10, 2014, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2008/05/20080522172353srenod0.6383936.html#axzz2upcZNKIN>; Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 9; Whaley Eager, *From Freedom Fighters to Terrorists*, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 11-15; O'Rourke, "What's Special About Female Suicide Terrorism?"; Bloom, "Feminism, Rape and War: Engendering Suicide Terror?" in *Dying to Kill*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists;" Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 11-15; O'Rourke, "What's Special About Female Suicide Terrorism?"; Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (Emmaus, Pa.: Rodale, 2003); Eileen MacDonald, *Shoot the Women First* (New York: Random House, 1991).

<sup>23</sup> Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31(2008), 304, accessed February 1, 2014, doi: 10.1080/10576100801925695; Yoram Schweitzer, "Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers: Reality vs. Myth" in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?* ed. Y. Schweitzer, The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, 2006; Adam Dolnik, "Critical Commentary on "Who are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?" *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 16:4 (2004): 847, accessed July 22, 2014, DOI: 10.1080/095465590899731.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques and Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?" 319, 321; Mia Bloom citing Yoram Schweitzer and Farhana Ali, in *Women as Victims and Victimizers*.

immediately following the attack to nationalistic and religious as the individual spends time in jail undergoing socialization and indoctrination.<sup>25</sup> Jacques and Taylor studied a sample of men and women that spanned several different groups.

The following assessment of literature on female radicalization to violent extremism will examine the four overarching categories with an emphasis on personal motivations, which have the greatest potential for differing from male motivations and providing unique insight for future policy.

### ***Political and Religious Drivers***

Religious and political motivations to engage in violent extremism are not gender specific and are usually associated with group level motivations tied to the ideology. Throughout the various studies on female involvement in extremism, religious and political factors were cited but were most often in combination with a personal factor, such as trauma resulting from a nationalist struggle or revenge for a relative's death.<sup>26</sup> Religious and political motivations were not enough for most individuals to take the next step towards violent extremism, particularly for suicide attacks.

By definition, terrorism implies political motivations exist behind the violent extremist behavior.<sup>27</sup> Many of the women and groups examined in the literature were

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<sup>25</sup> Schweitzer, "Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers: Reality vs. Myth" in *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?*

<sup>26</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond: Understanding the Motivations and Life Trajectories of Chechen Female Terrorists," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 106; Anne Speckhard and Khapta Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29 (2006), 444, accessed February 1, 2014. DOI: 10.1080/10576100600698550; Von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," 399.

<sup>27</sup> John Horgan. *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Routledge: New York, 2005), 84; Kubra Gultekin, "Women Engagement In Terrorism: What Motivates Females to Join in Terrorist Organizations?" *Understanding Terrorism: Analysis of Sociological and Psychological Aspects* 22, no. 1 (June 2007): 168-169. *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 10, 2014).



part of groups fighting for nationalist causes – the Chechens, Palestinians, and the Kurds in Turkey; therefore, they had underlying nationalist or political motivations.<sup>28</sup> However, Speckhard and Ahkmedova, studying the suicide terrorism of Chechen women, argue that political motivations alone will not motivate individuals to embrace suicide attacks, but instead the political aspect is an organizational level motive that gives the individual justification for their act.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, they assert that individuals who engage in violent extremism seem to be compelled to suicide attacks by trauma, grief, and hopelessness – personal motivations.<sup>30</sup>

Many violent extremist groups are rooted in religious doctrine; therefore, women in these groups often cite religious factors, particularly martyrdom, as a motivating factor.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the literature and case studies, religion appears to be a motivator in conjunction with other factors, but it seems that more than any other role, religion provides the resonating ideology or justification to an individual that is already in the process of or motivated to radicalizing.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> O'Rourke "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?"; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 443-444; Karla Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi Movement," in *Female Militancy and Terrorism*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008) 87-91; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond," 110, 112; Y. Schweitzer, "Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers: Virtuous Heroines or Damaged Goods," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 143; Anat Berko and Edna Erez, "Martyrs or murderers? Victims or victimizers? The Voices of Would-Be Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers" in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 160.

<sup>29</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 444-445.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 444.

<sup>31</sup> D. Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analyzing Female Suicide," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 52; Karla Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi," 93; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond," 111, 112.

<sup>32</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond," 112. Cindy Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, ed. Cindy Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

It is also important to note that religion and political factors are often combined.<sup>33</sup> For example, the Palestinians and the Chechens are both spurred by nationalist goals but each conflict is also tied to Islam and often the suicide attacks are linked to martyrdom.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the Chechen struggle was rooted in nationalist independence goals but evolved to incorporate Islamist ties.<sup>35</sup> While these political and religious motivations are often present for women, they are applicable at the group level and are not necessarily specific to women.

### ***Personal***

Personal motivations are those driving factors that happen on the individual level beyond religious or political ideology. Because personal motivations are specific to the individual, they are many and varied, but this literature review concentrates on four of the most often cited for female radicalization to violent extremism. Two of these theories are gender specific: Redemption or Regaining Honor and Striving for Equality.

### ***Revenge and Grief***

Grief and the desire for revenge, normally as a result of a relative or close friend dying at the hands of the enemy, are often cited as motivations for women participating in violent extremism.<sup>36</sup> According to O'Rourke's analysis, women are more likely than men to have suffered the loss of a family member, but this difference is most likely due

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<sup>33</sup> K. Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi," 87-91; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 446.

<sup>34</sup> Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi," 87-91.

<sup>35</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 445.

<sup>36</sup> Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 11; Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," 19; Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimizers*; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 450-451, 454; Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," 1031; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "Black Widows and Beyond," 106; O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 710; Jacques and Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?" 307.

terrorist groups using revenge to recruit women.<sup>37</sup> Major Suttan states that grief and the related revenge are a “significant motivation,” particularly for those women who lose a “dominant male figure in their lives.”<sup>38</sup> Speckhard takes this point further and states that individuals often engage in violent extremism, specifically suicide terrorism, to defend and avenge their communities to “make the enemy other feel their pain.”<sup>39</sup>

Revenge is often associated with suicide bombing groups and is one of the most common motivations for the Chechen Black Widows and the LTTE.<sup>40</sup> For example, Speckhard and Ahkmedova concluded through their study of Chechen women that revenge is the dominant motivation.<sup>41</sup> While many scholars find this motivation to be prevalent, they recognize that revenge and grief do not operate in a vacuum and typically combine with ideology and beliefs centered in religion and politics.<sup>42</sup> This is particularly true for revenge and politics or nationalist conflicts where many individuals are dying as part of the conflict.

### Trauma

Throughout the literature, trauma, mainly from violence, is often cited as a personal motivation for women radicalizing, particularly for individuals that become

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<sup>37</sup> O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” 710. O’Rourke states that this difference in numbers is most likely due to the terrorist group using revenge heavily to recruit females.

<sup>38</sup> Major Marne L. Suttan, *The Rising Importance of Women in Terrorism and the Need to Reform Counterterrorism Strategy*, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: United States Army Command and General Staff College (2009), 22.

<sup>39</sup> Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” 1030.

<sup>40</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 451,454; Gultekin, “Women Engagement in Terrorism: What Motivates Females to Join in Terrorist Organizations?” 173; O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” 710-711; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “Black Widows and Beyond,” Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 145, 157, 159.

<sup>41</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 468.

<sup>42</sup> Suttan, *The Rising Importance of Women in Terrorism and the Need to Reform Counterterrorism Strategy*, 22; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “Black Widows and Beyond,” 112.

suicide bombers.<sup>43</sup> Trauma often overlaps with revenge and grief, but also incorporates trauma associated with witnessing societal or community-based incidents and not necessarily personal or a relative.<sup>44</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova found trauma, often combined with revenge and support of a political cause, was a powerful motivator and a factor/weakness exploited by terrorist groups in the recruitment of an individual.<sup>45</sup> Trauma was found throughout studies on the LTTE, Chechen Black Widows, and Palestinian women.<sup>46</sup>

Similarly, secondary trauma, or trauma experienced through an associated group, is often cited as a reason for embracing violence as a means. Secondary trauma often occurs outside of conflict zones for immigrant populations, who identify with a group experiencing injustices.<sup>47</sup> This includes individuals who access material on the internet depicting traumatic acts against a victimized Muslim population.<sup>48</sup> The individual often identifies with the victimized population and therefore experiences secondary trauma and develops a desire to act in defensive of the population or for justice.<sup>49</sup>

#### Regaining Honor and Reinforcing Gender Roles

A prominent, gender-specific hypothesis on female motivations contends that the desire to “re-embrace gender societal norms” and to restore one’s honor or family honor

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<sup>43</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 85-87; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 454-455; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “Black Widows and Beyond,” 106, 110; Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” 1030, 1046; Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*.

<sup>44</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 454-455.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 444.

<sup>46</sup> Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “Black Widows and Beyond;” Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 8, 145; Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*.

<sup>47</sup> Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” 1031, 1033; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 486.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

is a significant driver across diverse groups.<sup>50</sup> Female honor is comprised of sexual purity, marital fidelity and the ability to fulfill traditional societal roles, such as carrying children.<sup>51</sup> Sexual purity can be violated through sexual misconduct (alleged or actual), infidelity, and rape.<sup>52</sup> Rape is often named as a factor in female violent extremism to regain honor and also as a motivator from personal trauma.<sup>53</sup> Traditional societal roles involve the women's ability to perform as a wife and mother, including bearing children, and whether or not she is marriageable.<sup>54</sup> Divorce is also a source of dishonor because it implies the woman cannot or will not perform traditional roles.<sup>55</sup> When a woman cannot fill these factors (purity, marital fidelity and traditional roles), it is often considered dishonorable not only for the woman but for her family.<sup>56</sup>

Women who feel dishonored within these societies can be motivated to reaffirm their role and commitment to the community with an act of violent extremism.<sup>57</sup> This motivation is primarily associated with women who embark on suicide bombing attacks with the goal of martyrdom. Martyrdom provides the family and individual with honor in death, purity will be restored, and forgiveness will be granted.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 145, 160, 163; Ken Sofer and Jennifer Addison, "The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers," Center for American Progress, January 5, 2012. Accessed June 7, 2014. <http://americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2012/01/05/10992/the-unaddressed-threat-of-female-suicide-bombers/>; Gultekin, "Women Engagement in Terrorism: What Motivates Females to Join In Terrorist Organizations," 173; O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 706-707, 717; Bloom, "Bombshells: Women and Terror," 11.

<sup>51</sup> Sofer and Addison, "The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers;" O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 711.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid; Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimiziers*.

<sup>53</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 145, 159-160, 163; O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 712-713.

<sup>54</sup> Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimiziers*; O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 711.

<sup>55</sup> O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 712.

<sup>56</sup> Sofer and Addison, "The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers."

<sup>57</sup> O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 711.

<sup>58</sup> Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimiziers*; Cunningham, "Cross-Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," 181; Speckhard and Ahkmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," 470.

Lindsey O'Rourke, one main proponent of this motivation, argues that women choose to support violent extremism to reaffirm norms associated with their gender role.<sup>59</sup> O'Rourke examined female suicide bombing demographics, including marital status and age (an older age indicating an individual is less likely to get married), terrorist group rhetoric, and statements by failed bombers in her analysis.<sup>60</sup> She confirmed her hypothesis as it related to martial values, but had less data and information on infertility and sexual honor.<sup>61</sup> O'Rourke provides evidence that terrorist groups cater to this motivation with propaganda on the utopian for unmarried women who achieve martyrdom and in some cases the relatives of the women conduct wedding celebrations after the attack.<sup>62</sup>

Scholars who recognize this as a motivation typically provide evidence from Palestinian suicide bombers, the LTTE Black Tigresses, Chechen Black Widows and rape victims who have joined violent extremist groups.<sup>63</sup> Speckhard and Akhmedova argue that this motivation and the motivation for improved social status or the desire to escape oppression can be contributing motivators but secondary to others, such as trauma, revenge and political reasons.<sup>64</sup> Barbara Victor examines the inability of some Palestinian women to fulfill traditional roles, but she focuses more on women resenting or acting out against those traditional roles, which is examined in the following section.<sup>65</sup> While seemingly different motivations, these two are in fact related and are very closely associated with the status and role of women in these societies.

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<sup>59</sup> O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 702,706. It should be noted that O'Rourke does not argue that this is the primary motivation but rather a contributing motivation (706).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid 706-713.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid 709.

<sup>63</sup> O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 711-713; Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 160.

<sup>64</sup> Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," 1036, 1046.

<sup>65</sup> Victor, *Army of Roses*, 8, 34; O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 702.

Struggle for Equality and Breaking Traditional Roles

An alternate school of thought asserts that females join extremist groups, often engaging in suicide bombings, as a form of feminist activism against traditional, “predetermined” roles, which the women resent and want to escape.<sup>66</sup> Scholars within this school argue that involvement in a violent extremist organization offers women an enhanced social status or empowerment and respect in societies with strict gender roles.<sup>67</sup> These authors find that women are active in violent extremism to promote independence and equality between genders, particularly in patriarchal societies.<sup>68</sup> Scholars arguing for equality as a motivation find that the patriarchal societies make women more vulnerable to violent radicalization because it is one way the women feel they can achieve equality in such a society.<sup>69</sup>

Scholars within this school argue that these women are trying to redefine the role of women in their community and trying to prove that they are equally dedicated to the cause and/or ideology through activities with violent extremist groups.<sup>70</sup> Von Knop asserts that women have many of the same reasons as men for participating in violent extremism, meaning political and religious, but “gender-based oppression” and second

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<sup>66</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 145-147; Ness, “Introduction,” in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, 3; O’Rourke, “What’s Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” 683, 702-703 - O’Rourke addresses as one prominent school of thought that she rejects; Victor, *Army of Roses*, 6; Von Knop, “The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Women,” 399; Berko and Erez, “Martyrs or murderers? Victims or victimizers?” 160.

<sup>67</sup> Ness, “Introduction,” in *Female Terrorism and Militancy*, 17; Bloom, *Women as Victims and Victimizers*; Victor, *Army of Roses*; Maleeha Aslam, “New Vulnerabilities of Muslim Women in the Age of Terror: The Case of the Red Mosque Siege in Islamabad, Pakistan,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 11, no. 3/ 4 (September 2010): 430; Bloom, “Bombshells: Women and Terror,” 12-14.

<sup>68</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 146-147, 159; Sofer and Addison, “The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers,” Von Knop, “The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Women,” 399; Victor, *Army of Roses*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 164-165; Sofer and Addison, “The Unaddressed Threat of Female Suicide Bombers,” Von Knop, “The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Women,” 399; Berko and Erez, “Martyrs or murderers? Victims or victimizers? The Voices of Would-Be Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers,” 147.

<sup>70</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 146-147.

class status as women is a further motivating factor and a means for these women to pursue opportunities beyond the traditionally limited ones.<sup>71</sup> Berko and Erez found in their analysis of failed female suicide bombers that women engage in suicide bombings to resist gender oppression and “remove gender-based shackles.”<sup>72</sup> Many of these authors utilize biographical information and interviews to conduct case studies on Palestinian, Kurdish (PKK) and Tamil Tiger women as evidence of a struggle for equality.<sup>73</sup>

One prominent proponent for this hypothesis, Barbara Victor, studies Palestinian women who engage in suicide terrorism, and she asserts that the women undertaking these terrorist acts do not meet and/or adhere to the predetermined roles for women.<sup>74</sup> Victor referencing the suicide attacks of Palestinian women calls it a “misguided feminist movement,” which regards female suicide bombers as liberated.<sup>75</sup> As part of her argument, Victor provides evidence that suicide bombers who achieve martyrdom are granted a higher status within the community, and she conveys each woman’s story with a focus on the events or areas that suggest potential feminist goals.<sup>76</sup>

### **Methodology for Analysis of Female Motivations**

In this analysis, I utilize individual case studies of female violent extremists that adhere to an Islamic extremist ideology, and I examine the motivations of each of these

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<sup>71</sup> Von Knop, “The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Women,” 399.

<sup>72</sup> Berko and Erez, “Martyrs or murderers? Victims or victimizers? The Voices of Would-Be Palestinian Female Suicide Bombers,” 160.

<sup>73</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 145-147, 162; Victor, *Army of Roses*.

<sup>74</sup> Victor, *Army of Roses*. – Speckhard (unpublished interviews) contradicts Victor’s evidence as discussed in Speckhard and Ahkmedova, “The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism,” 469.

<sup>75</sup> Victor, *Army of Roses*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid 30.



women to embrace violence as an acceptable means of furthering their cause or radical ideas.<sup>77</sup> I assess case studies of individuals rather than a higher-level group analysis because radicalization is an individualized process that is best examined on a more granular level, particularly when trying to determine personal motivations.<sup>78</sup> The case studies include an analysis of news articles, trial documents, interviews with relatives or the individual, police reports, and official government documents. Each case study is analyzed to determine the motivations of the individual involved and the applicability of the established theories on female radicalization described above.

### **Female Violent Extremist Case Studies**

The case studies under evaluation were selected based on several factors. Many assessments of female radicalization focus on the same case studies, for example Wafa Idris, the first Palestinian suicide bomber, or utilize case studies that conform to their hypothesis without any challenges or outliers. For example, many authors choose case studies entirely from one population or group (e.g. Palestinian women), which makes them more likely to conform than if cases are taken from a variety of groups, and some authors seem to pick cases within a group that will support their theory. In order to accurately assess the applicability or existence of the described motivations and to not choose case studies that would be bias or conform to a particular hypothesis, this paper analyzes cases that were not as widely examined and did not align with one author's

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<sup>77</sup> For definition of violent radicalization see- Lorenzo Vidino, "Countering Radicalization in America," USIP Special Report, November 2010, 1.

<sup>78</sup> The OSCE Report also notes the individualized nature and non-linear path of radicalization. (1)

hypothesis. However, case study selection was influenced by the availability of information on the individual.

For this analysis, I have selected four cases of Western female radicalization. The literature on female motivations currently has a gap in examining the motivations of Western female cases in the same manner, or to the same extent, as the literature covers specific female populations like the Palestinian female suicide bombers, the Tamil Tiger Black Tigresses, or the Chechen Black Widows. This paper also incorporates case studies with suicide and non-suicide attacks because many of the theories on motivations were written specific to suicide terrorism, and as the OSCE Report notes, there is a general lack of research on women outside of suicide bombers.<sup>79</sup>

Examining Western female motivations will provide unique insight into female radicalization because they are not embedded within a particular society or citizenry that has distinct conflicts and issues experienced by the population in a similar manner. For example, the Palestinian suicide bombers have similar issues and strains because they live in an area and environment where they are experiencing conflict with similar traumas and everyday issues. Much of the literature focuses on these distinct groups of females in particular countries or societies that are experiencing the same types of trauma and conflict (e.g. the Palestinians, the Chechens), whereas Western homegrown females are experiencing these issues in a unique setting and in some cases completely removed from a group.

Based on the literature reviewed, I expect to find that Western homegrown cases will exhibit more political and religious motivations with personal motivations acting as a

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<sup>79</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. "Women and Terrorist Radicalization Final Report," 3.

secondary factor because the women reside in relatively conflict free environments and have a more equal place in society. I do not expect to find signs of the cases struggling for equality to break traditional roles, nor do I expect to find evidence of regaining honor and reinforcing gender roles due to the greater level of freedom and equality in Western societies. I also do not expect to find revenge as a strong motivator or trauma related to conflict because the Western cases reside in stable countries without large-scale internal violence.

### ***Western Violent Extremists***

#### ***Muriel Degauque – Belgian Convert and Suicide Bomber***

Muriel Degauque was a 38 year-old convert to Islam, who became the first European female suicide bomber and the first known female suicide bomber in Iraq when she attacked a patrol in Baquba, Iraq on November 9, 2005.<sup>80</sup> As such, she has been widely referenced but her motivations have not been analyzed to assess the applicability of the leading theories on female motivations to engage in violent extremism.

Muriel Degauque is described as being “rebellious” with a “troubled upbringing” despite being treated well by her family.<sup>81</sup> She was from a small, traditional coal mining and factory town, Charleroi in Belgium, and she was alleged to have been a drug user

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<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Watt, “From Belgian Cul-de-sac to Suicide Bomber in Iraq,” *The Guardian*, December 1, 2005. accessed July 11, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/dec/02/iraq.islam>; Murad Batal al-Shishani, “Is the role of women in al-Qaeda increasing?” *BBC News Middle East*, October 7, 2010. Accessed July 11, 2014. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11484672>

<sup>81</sup> Watt, “From Belgian Cul-de-sac to Suicide Bomber in Iraq;” Craig S. Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber,” *The New York Times*, December 6, 2005. Accessed July 11, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/06/international/europe/06brussels.html?pagewanted=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Subjects/T/Terrorism&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/06/international/europe/06brussels.html?pagewanted=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/Subjects/T/Terrorism&_r=0)

associating with the “wrong crowd.”<sup>82</sup> Degauque joined a motorcycle club with her older brother, but local accounts assert that her rebellious behavior became worse and her life was significantly impacted after her brother died in a motorcycle accident.<sup>83</sup> She was even reported to have said she should have died instead of him.<sup>84</sup> During this troubled time, she married a Turkish man, but was divorced two years later.<sup>85</sup> According to some media reports, she then met an Algerian man who introduced her to Islam, which her family is reported to have been pleased with initially because it made her stop drinking and doing drugs.<sup>86</sup>

A few years later, Degauque met and married Hissam/Issam Goris, a Moroccan born Belgian credited with influencing Degauque’s extremist beliefs.<sup>87</sup> She traveled to Morocco with Goris, where she is said to have studied Arabic and the Koran, before returning to Brussels.<sup>88</sup> It was during her time with Goris that she became estranged from her family and became more radical.<sup>89</sup>

Accounts state that Muriel progressed from a moderate convert to an individual embracing an extreme interpretation of Islam with strict rules for Islamic customs, including men and women eating separately, no television, and fully covering her body.<sup>90</sup> Muriel’s mother, Liliane Degauque, describes how her daughter took her conversion to the extreme, “Muriel became more Muslim than a Muslim. When she first converted she

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber,” BBC News, “Journey of Belgian Female Bomber,” December 2, 2005. Accessed July 11, 2014. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4491334.stm>

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> BBC News, “Journey of Belgian Female Bomber.”

<sup>85</sup> Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Some accounts assert that she converted after meeting Goris (see Watt, “From Belgian Cul-de-sac to Suicide Bomber in Iraq”).

<sup>87</sup> Watt, “From Belgian Cul-de-sac to Suicide Bomber in Iraq,” Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber.”

<sup>88</sup> Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber.”

<sup>89</sup> BBC News, “Journey of Belgian Female Bomber.”

<sup>90</sup> Ibid; Smith, “Raised as a Catholic in Belgium, She Died as a Muslim Bomber.”

wore a simple veil. But with her last husband she wore a [head to toe] chador."<sup>91</sup> Muriel's parents believe she was brainwashed, and conveyed that they were estranged from her.<sup>92</sup>

Outside of Degauque's religious conversion and strict adherence to ultra-conservative customs none of the accounts of Muriel indicate political or religious motivations. Based on media accounts, her radicalization to violent extremism seems to be primarily based on personal motivations. This must be viewed with caution since there are no available personal accounts from Degauque. She is associated with three motivations that are widely studied for suicide bombers, which was her ultimate act of violent extremism.

Degauque experienced trauma and grief with the loss of her brother, which was described as greatly impacting her and marking a significant change in her behavior. The grief associated with this event is not traditional in the sense that it was not at the hands of an enemy, but it was the result of losing a significant male figure in her life. Also, the trauma resulting from her brother's death was not from conflict or violence as described for the trauma theory, but it clearly had a great impact on her life after that point.

Furthermore, Degauque showed signs consistent with the theory on regaining honor and reinforcing gender roles. Her past was filled with acts and behavior that could be interpreted as dishonorable. Her divorce from her first husband meets the definition of female dishonor as described for traditional societies in the established theory and it took place after her conversion to Islam. Her divorce was not described as a life-altering event or a source of shame, but shortly after she did meet her second husband and adopt an extremely conservative interpretation of Islam. Degauque also engaged in rebellious

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<sup>91</sup> Watt, "From Belgian Cul-de-sac to Suicide Bomber in Iraq."

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

behavior, including drugs and alcohol usage, which does not directly reflect the defined sense of dishonor as described in the theory, but does present a new potential source of dishonor reflecting behavior outside of accepted societal norms. This is particularly true given her upbringing in a traditional coal and factory town.

In the theory on female restoration of honor and embracing gender roles, O'Rourke briefly examines Degauque's case and argues that if Degauque resents "the gender norms of any society, it would be the Western gender-neutral norms embraced by Belgium, not the gender-specific norms of Iraqi society."<sup>93</sup> Based on the findings of the case study, I do not agree that Degauque necessarily resented Western norms, but instead I believe she might have felt underlying pressure for elements of traditional female honor even in the West. Particularly, since she was from a traditional and relatively conservative coal town. She goes from one extreme to another with rebellious behavior followed by her embrace of a strict and extreme form of Islam, and eventually her suicide bombing. I would also argue that despite the West having a more neutral stance on gender norms, there are still behaviors that are considered outside of societal norms and Degauque could have been trying to restore her honor within these norms.

*Roshonara Choudhry – Third Generation British Citizen of Bangladeshi Origin*

Roshonara Choudhry is a British born citizen, who stabbed and attempted to murder Member of Parliament (MP) Stephen Timms on May 4, 2010 in London.<sup>94</sup>

Choudhry is a third generation British citizen from a moderate Muslim family of

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<sup>93</sup> O'Rourke, "What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?" 716.

<sup>94</sup> Vikram Dodd, "Profile: Roshonara Choudhry," *The Guardian*, November 2, 2010, accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/02/profile-roshonara-choudhry-stephen-timms>

Bangladeshi origin.<sup>95</sup> She had a stable and normal childhood, and she was a successful student enrolled in King's College and volunteering as a mentor on the weekends.<sup>96</sup> At the time of the attack, Choudhry's father was unemployed and under some financial strain.<sup>97</sup>

In 2009, Choudhry began following the materials and videos of Anwar al-Awlaki, who advocated violent attacks to stop the atrocities and oppression of the West against Muslims, and she appears to have radicalized over a six-month period from November 2009 to May 2010.<sup>98</sup> Choudhry also viewed videos on what she refers to as the resistance in Afghanistan and Iraq and a video from Sheikh Abdullah Azzam that asserted that women have a responsibility and duty to fight along with men.<sup>99</sup> She is adamant that she did not interact with others during her radicalization, and the police investigation supports this because no contacts or communication were found.<sup>100</sup> In April 2010, shortly before the attack, Choudhry dropped out of school due to her school's counter-radicalization department and the granting of an award to Israeli President Shimon Peres, both of which she considered working against Muslims and against her religion.<sup>101</sup>

Roshonara Choudhry conveyed in her testimony and police interview that she was upset about the wars in Iraq and the treatment of Muslims in Iraq and Palestine.<sup>102</sup> She

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<sup>95</sup> Gordon Rayner and John Bingham, "Stephen Timms Stabbing: How Internet Sermons Turned Quiet Student into Fanatic," *The Telegraph*, November 3, 2010, accessed July 12, 2014. [http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8105516/Stephen-Timms-stabbing-how-internet-sermons-turned-quiet-student-into-fanatic.html?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/8105516/Stephen-Timms-stabbing-how-internet-sermons-turned-quiet-student-into-fanatic.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter)

<sup>96</sup> Dodd, "Profile: Roshonara Choudhry;" Rayner and Bingham, "Stephen Timms Stabbing: How Internet Sermons Turned Quiet Student into Fanatic."

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Vikram Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts," *The Guardian*, November 3, 2010, accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonara-choudhry-police-interview>

<sup>100</sup> Rayner and Bingham, "Stephen Timms Stabbing: How Internet Sermons Turned Quiet Student into Fanatic."

<sup>101</sup> Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts."

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

states, “I feel like it's worth it because millions of Iraqis are suffering and I should do what I can to help them and not just be inactive and do nothing while they suffer.”<sup>103</sup> She also affirms that she had a duty to fulfill to other Muslims and she wanted to become a martyr.<sup>104</sup> Her testimony and statements indicate that she was motivated by secondary traumatization from the videos and images she viewed of casualties and Iraqi prisons and revenge for oppressed Muslims.<sup>105</sup>

Choudhry's secondary traumatization is the result of her association with victimized and oppressed Muslims that she viewed in online videos and images. Her secondary traumatization conforms to the concept of secondary traumatization as outlined in the literature review. Furthermore, Choudhry's revenge aligns with Speckhard's theory that individuals engage in violent extremism to defend and avenge their communities, but her community in this case is her association with victimized Muslims viewed via the internet.<sup>106</sup> Her desire for revenge stems from her secondary traumatization.

Choudhry also indicated that she was motivated to act for political and religious reasons. Choudhry strongly disapproved of the Iraq War and chose her target based on his vote for the war. She also was moved by what she conveys as a religious duty. She described herself as always being “quite religious” but indicated that she became very involved in religion after coming across al-Awlaki's online materials.<sup>107</sup> The police interviews reveal that her political and religious motivations stem from her viewing of al-

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” 1030.

<sup>107</sup> Dodd, “Roshonara Choudhry: Police Interview Extracts,”



Awlaki's materials and her realization that she had to defend fellow Muslims.<sup>108</sup> She states that she did not have strong political and religious views against the Iraq war until she had this realization, which implies that her political and religious motivations were interconnected with her personal reasons. Choudhry does not appear to conform to any of the uniquely female theories on motivation.

Malika El-Aroud – Belgian Jihadist

Malika El-Aroud, a Belgian woman of Moroccan origin, is an Al Qaeda middle manager, who ran a website supporting Al Qaeda and linked Belgian and French recruits with Al Qaeda Central.<sup>109</sup> She is unique in the case studies because she is the only individual who spent time in a conflict zone with Al Qaeda operatives, and she is the widow of a martyr. Also, unlike the other case studies, she is a recruiter and inspirational leader rather than a violent actor.<sup>110</sup>

El-Aroud grew up in a Muslim family, where her parents required her to wear a veil, but she rebelled throughout her youth, including by wearing inappropriate attire.<sup>111</sup> At the age of eighteen, she married a Moroccan man and began frequenting nightclubs, sleeping at random apartments and showering in public bathrooms.<sup>112</sup> During this time, she was jobless and even attempted suicide.<sup>113</sup> She eventually became engaged to a

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Elaine Sciolino and Souad Mekhennet, "Al Qaeda Warrior Uses Internet to Rally Women," *The New York Times*, May 28, 2008, accessed July 12, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/28/world/europe/28terror.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/28/world/europe/28terror.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&); Peter Neumann, Ryan Evans, and Raffaello Pantucci, "Locating Al Qaeda's Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers," *Studies In Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 11 (November 2011): 835, accessed July 22, 2014, DOI 10.1080/1057610X.2011.611936.

<sup>110</sup> Sciolino and Mekhennet, "Al Qaeda Warrior Uses Internet to Rally Women."

<sup>111</sup> Paul Cruickshank, "Love in the Time of Terror," *Marie Claire*, May 15, 2009. Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.marieclaire.com/world-reports/news/malika-el-aroud-female-terrorist>

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

cousin, who left her after she became pregnant before the wedding.<sup>114</sup> As a single mother, in her early thirties, El-Aroud re-engaged with her Muslim faith taking classes at a radical mosque, but despite this, she had two more marriages that quickly ended in divorce.<sup>115</sup> Through the mosque, she met and married Abdessattar Dahmane, an extremist affiliated with Al Qaeda.<sup>116</sup>

Abdessattar introduced El-Aroud to the concept of “global jihad” to avenge victimized Muslims, and in 2000, he travelled to Afghanistan to a jihadist training camp and Al Qaeda compound, where El-Aroud met him in 2001.<sup>117</sup> The two lived in Afghanistan until Abdessattar left in August 2001 to conduct a secret suicide mission killing Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance leader; El-Aroud did not find out about the mission until after his death.<sup>118</sup> Following the mission, El-Aroud escaped to Pakistan to avoid being killed by the Northern Alliance; in December 2001, she turned herself into the Belgian Embassy in Pakistan and returned to Belgium, where she was charged and cleared regarding Massoud’s murder.<sup>119</sup>

When she returned to Belgium, she met and married Moez Garsallaoui, a Tunisian born extremist.<sup>120</sup> The two promoted Al Qaeda online and administered websites supporting Al Qaeda with El-Aroud’s website (Minibar SoS) gathering more than 1,400 followers as she wrote under the name Oum Obeyda.<sup>121</sup> In 2007, they were both convicted in Switzerland for operating the pro-Al Qaeda websites, and in 2008, El-Aroud was arrested for her alleged role in a planned terror attack to strike the EU Summit in

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid; Neumann et al. “Locating Al Qaeda’s Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers,” 835.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid; Sciolino and Mekhennet, “Al Qaeda Warrior Uses Internet to Rally Women.”

Brussels.<sup>122</sup> Finally, in 2010, El-Aroud was convicted of leading a group tied to Al Qaeda and was sentenced to eight years in prison.<sup>123</sup>

El-Aroud was motivated by a combination of factors that led to her support for violent extremism. She had experienced secondary traumatization from associating with what she perceived as victimized Muslim populations. This started when Abdessattar introduced her to global jihad in defense of victimized Muslims, and continued when she arrived in Afghanistan with Abdessattar showing her areas destroyed by war and poverty, blaming the US.<sup>124</sup> The secondary traumatization led El-Aroud to seek revenge for her fellow Muslims.

Also, the death of Abdessattar caused El Aroud great grief, which seems to spur her to support violent extremists even after her return to Europe.<sup>125</sup> Neumann asserts that El-Aroud and Garsallaoui were “driven by the desire to avenge El Aroud’s former husband’s [Abdessattar] death.”<sup>126</sup> This does not account for her acceptance of violent extremism prior to this point but explains her persistence in recruitment when she returned to Europe, despite her multiple arrests.

El-Aroud’s past is filled with events and behavior that could be considered dishonorable and that might have prompted her to embrace an extreme and conservative version of Islam to recover her honor. She rebelled as a youth, had multiple divorces, and gave birth out of wedlock. All of these factors would be considered violating female honor and societal norms as defined in the theory described in the literature review.

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<sup>122</sup> CNN, “Belgian Police Arrest ‘al Qaeda legend,’” December 11, 2008. Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/europe/12/11/belgium.terror.arrests/index.html>

<sup>123</sup> BBC News, “Belgium Convicts Eight on Terrorism Charges,” May 10, 2010. Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8673229.stm>

<sup>124</sup> Cruickshank, “Love in the Time of Terror.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Neumann et al., “Locating Al Qaeda’s Center of Gravity: The Role of Middle Managers,” 835.

While El-Aroud did not pursue a path of martyrdom, her move to the most conservative and extreme interpretation of Islam and relentless support for Al Qaeda could indicate that she was trying to reestablish her honor and conform to the most conservative version of societal roles.

It is clear that El-Aroud did not engage in violent extremism to fight for equality or a higher social status. In fact, Cruickshank notes that during his interview with El-Aroud, she was bossing her husband, Garsallaoui, around.<sup>127</sup> She is also reported to have written, “Normally in Islam the men are stronger than the women, but I prove that it is important to fear God — and no one else. It is important that I am a woman. There are men who don’t want to speak out because they are afraid of getting into trouble. Even when I get into trouble, I speak out.”<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, Belgian police have referred to her as an “Al Qaeda Living Legend.”<sup>129</sup>

*Jihad Jane or Colleen LaRose/Fatima LaRose – American Convert*

Colleen LaRose, an American citizen and convert to Islam, was arrested in 2009 for providing material support to a terrorist group and traveling to Europe to kill Lars Vilks, a Swedish cartoonist, for his portrayal of the prophet Mohammed’s head on a dog body.<sup>130</sup> LaRose had a tumultuous life, which ultimately ended with her radicalization

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<sup>127</sup> Cruickshank, “Love in the Time of Terror.”

<sup>128</sup> Sciolino and Mekhennet, “Al Qaeda Warrior Uses Internet to Rally Women.”

<sup>129</sup> CNN, “Belgian Police Arrest ‘al Qaeda legend.’”

<sup>130</sup> John Shiffman, “U.S. Woman Known as Jihad Jane Sentenced to 10 Years in Plot,” *Reuters*, January 6, 2014. Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/06/us-usa-jihadjane-idUSBREA050PC20140106>; United States vs. Colleen R. LaRose, Grand Jury Indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District Pennsylvania, filed March 4, 2010, pp. 3-4, <http://intelfiles.egoplex.com/2010-03-04-LaRose-Indictment.pdf>

and arrest on terrorism charges. Prior to her conversion to Islam and radicalization, she was not involved in religion.<sup>131</sup>

LaRose suffered from a very troubled and traumatic youth. Throughout her childhood, LaRose's father raped her.<sup>132</sup> She also started using drugs in her youth.<sup>133</sup> She eventually ran away from home and became a prostitute, before marrying a much older man at the age of sixteen.<sup>134</sup> LaRose was divorced from her first husband and had married and divorced a second time before the age of twenty-four.<sup>135</sup> At the time of her radicalization, she was living with her boyfriend outside of Philadelphia, PA and serving as his father's caretaker.<sup>136</sup>

Colleen LaRose converted to Islam online and spent 2008-2009 communicating with extremists via chat rooms, which ultimately led to her radicalization to violent extremism.<sup>137</sup> LaRose expressed that she became attached to the individuals she communicated with online and was easily convinced to act by these extremists.<sup>138</sup> In addition to the plot against Vilks, she is accused of using the internet to recruit others and to raise money for violent extremism.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ed Pilkington, "Jihad Jane Explains Her Strange Journey From Victim to Radical Muslim," *The Guardian*, December 8, 2012, accessed July 12, 2014.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/08/jihad-jane-journey-victim-radical>

<sup>132</sup> Shiffman, "U.S. Woman Known as Jihad Jane Sentenced to 10 Years in Plot."

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Maryclaire Dale, "Jihad Jane Admits to Conspiracy to Support Terrorists, Murder," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 1, 2011. Accessed July 12, 2014. <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Latest-News-Wires/2011/0201/Jihad-Jane-admits-to-conspiracy-to-support-terrorists-murder>

<sup>136</sup> Dale, "Jihad Jane Admits to Conspiracy to Support Terrorists, Murder."

<sup>137</sup> Shiffman, "U.S. Woman Known as Jihad Jane Sentenced to 10 Years in Plot;" Pilkington, "Jihad Jane Explains Her Strange Journey From Victim to Radical Muslim."

<sup>138</sup> Pilkington, "Jihad Jane Explains Her Strange Journey From Victim to Radical Muslim."

<sup>139</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, 2011. "Appendix A. Summary of Post-9/11 Homegrown Violent Jihadist Terrorist Plots," *Congressional Research Service: Report*, 88; CNN, "U.S.: Pennsylvania Woman tried to recruit terrorists," March 10, 2010. Accessed July 22, 2014.

<http://www.cnn.com/2010/CRIME/03/09/pennsylvania.terror.indictment/>

LaRose communicated with an extremist in South Asia via the internet, and the two expressed their desire to become martyrs.<sup>140</sup> She even agreed to marry the individual to assist him in getting into Europe, and he instructed her to kill Lars Vilks because Al Qaeda had ordered his assassination and was offering a reward.<sup>141</sup> In August 2009, LaRose traveled to Europe to proceed with the plot.<sup>142</sup> After six weeks of frustration and no action from her co-conspirators in Europe, LaRose returned to the US, where she was arrested.<sup>143</sup>

In 2014, LaRose was convicted for her role in the plot and sentenced to ten years of prison time.<sup>144</sup> She apologized for her role in the plot and said she no longer wants jihad, but she maintains her adherence to Islam.<sup>145</sup> LaRose explained that she was drawn to Islam because Islam provided “a sense of belonging after a troubled childhood.”<sup>146</sup>

LaRose experienced significant trauma in her youth, which continued into adulthood. Based on these indicators, it appears that trauma played a role in motivating LaRose, but possibly in a different manner than others that experience trauma as a result of conflict. Furthermore, she expressed that watching coverage of Israeli actions in Gaza gave her great stress and she became more radical with this, which indicates secondary traumatization.<sup>147</sup> She states, “The Zionists started bombing the Palestinians and I

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<sup>140</sup> United States vs. Colleen R. LaRose, Grand Jury Indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District Pennsylvania, 3.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid 4; “Case of Lars Vilks and Colleen LaRose (“Jihad Jane”),” *Background Information Summaries* (April 2010): 1, *International Security & Counter Terrorism Reference Center*, EBSCOhost (accessed July 13, 2014).

<sup>142</sup> United States vs. Colleen R. LaRose, Grand Jury Indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District Pennsylvania, 7.

<sup>143</sup> Shiffman, “U.S. Woman Known as Jihad Jane Sentenced to 10 Years in Plot.”

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Pilkington, “Jihad Jane Explains Her Strange Journey From Victim to Radical Muslim.”

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

became more radical then. I started thinking more about Jihad.”<sup>148</sup> In 2008, she is alleged to have posted a comment on YouTube expressing her desire to act to help victimized Muslims.<sup>149</sup> Based on these comments and actions and her history, trauma and secondary traumatization were factors in her radicalization to violent extremism. Furthermore, her secondary traumatization led her to want revenge or to defend victimized Muslims.

LaRose’s troubled past included events that would be considered violations of female honor and her conversion followed closely by her radicalization could indicate that she took her actions to the extreme to regain her honor and illustrate her commitment in an attempt to belong. This is supported even further by the fact that she wished to pursue martyrdom. LaRose experienced rape and multiple divorces, which are violations of female honor as defined in the theory. Although she did not reside in a community with strict traditional roles like that of the Palestinian case studies typically cited for this motivation theory, societal norms still exist and the desire to belong and assume a strong identity.

### **Discussion of Case Study Findings and the Resulting Policy Implications**

All four case studies experienced secondary trauma by associating with a victimized (actual or perceived) Muslim population, often from online materials or propaganda. In three of the four case studies, the individual experienced personal trauma from either the loss of a relative or in the case of Colleen LaRose, trauma from rape. This suggests that trauma, as a motivation, should be considered beyond trauma caused

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> United States vs. Colleen R. LaRose, Grand Jury Indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District Pennsylvania, 3.

by conflict and violence and it suggests that trauma applies to a wide range of settings, including the West, which is generally considered stable and free of conflict. Perhaps more importantly, the existence of secondary trauma in *every* case study illustrates the need for counter-radicalization and countering/preventing violent extremism (CVE/PVE) materials and programs to refute propaganda, which depicts the West victimizing Muslim populations, or improved information campaigns when an incident, like that of the Abu Ghraib prison abuse and photographs, does occur. This also indicates that violent extremist propaganda, specifically Al Qaeda propaganda, is effective on a Western audience.

Similarly, revenge as a result of secondary traumatization was widespread throughout the case studies. The women expressed a desire to avenge or help the victimized groups with which they had associated. This does not exactly reflect the type of revenge found in the literature on revenge as a motivation, which is often revenge for the death of a close relative due to conflict with an enemy, but it demonstrates the impact and gravity of secondary traumatization.

In the Degauque, El-Aroud, and LaRose case studies, the women had troubled pasts with incidents that could be deemed dishonorable or violating female purity and societal norms. While a troubled past does not indicate a causal link to the motivation for regaining honor nor does it indicate a causal link to embracing violent extremism, it is noteworthy that three of the four case studies experienced violations of traditional female honor, as described by the literature, and then proceeded to adopt a rigid and extreme version of Islam. Also, it is interesting that this motivation could be a possibility in the West, which is often considered gender-neutral without rigid roles. I did not expect to



find this as a possibility for Western case studies because the West is considered a more equal and liberal environment. It is important for scholars and policymakers to take this into consideration when trying to understand radicalization and potential CVE efforts.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the trauma motivation and the regaining honor motivation seem to span both suicide and non-suicide actors. This is particularly interesting given that both motivations previously were studied for suicide bombers. In the LaRose and Choudhry case studies, which did not end in a suicide attack, both individuals indicated that they were seeking or open to martyrdom, but neither individual pursued an attack where martyrdom was certain, as is the case with a suicide bombing. El Aroud did not express a desire for martyrdom and exhibited signs of both motivations.

For all of the case studies analyzed, religion and politics played a role as a motivator in combination with other personal motivations. Political and religious factors primarily provided an identity for the individuals or a sense of belonging to a group, which was the group with which they associated with as part of secondary traumatization. For example, LaRose expressed that Islam gave her a sense of belonging and she also expressed that she had a desire to help victimized Muslims.<sup>150</sup> These factors often seemed to be secondary motivations or motivations associated with the group to which the individual belonged.

As expected, the motivation for female equality and breaking traditional roles was not illustrated in any of the Western case studies. This could be because women have a more equal role in Western countries or because it is a motivation built on weak

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<sup>150</sup> United States vs. Colleen R. LaRose, Grand Jury Indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District Pennsylvania, 3; Pilkington, "Jihad Jane Explains Her Strange Journey From Victim to Radical Muslim."

evidence/case studies. Coercion was also not demonstrated in any of the analyzed case studies, but the importance of relationships with violent extremists was evident.

It was clear through the case study analysis that relationships with extremists play a large role in the radicalization process. Three of the four case studies developed relationships with extremists – Degauque and El-Aroud formed in-person relationships and LaRose developed a virtual relationship. Choudhry is the only one who did not have any communication with other extremists. However, I chose not to include this as a motivation because I felt that these relationships reflected mobilization and socialization or interaction with other individuals more than a personal motivation that would prompt an individual to act.

In any analysis of motivations, it is important to recognize the potential existence of group level propaganda and auto-propaganda in the accounts provided by female extremists. A radicalized individual, particularly one who has socialized with other extremists, might state motivations that reflect the propaganda used by the group to attract members and justify the group's cause, and it can be difficult to separate those from the individual's motivations.<sup>151</sup> Also, there is the potential for auto-propaganda in the accounts. Auto-propaganda is propaganda used by the individual to "persuasively convince and remind themselves [the violent extremist] of the righteousness of their activities."<sup>152</sup> This is important when looking at the motivations of female violent extremists because some of the material cited in their trials, interrogations and interviews could reflect adopted propaganda. Therefore, while these materials are studied for insight into what drives females to embrace violence extremism, any analysis must take into

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<sup>151</sup> Horgan, *Becoming a Terrorist*, 89.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

account that the conveyed motivations might reflect the terrorist propaganda and recruitment materials.

## **Conclusion**

Understanding the motivations of women to engage in violent extremism is critical to understanding radicalization and therefore producing effective counter-radicalization or countering violent extremist (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) policies. This study analyzed the motivations of Western female violent extremists, which is a group that has been understudied. The analysis revealed that motivations traditionally associated with violent extremism in conflict zones and traditional Muslim communities with strict societal norms and roles can be applicable to Western case studies.

It is important to acknowledge that there are limits on the conclusions and generalizations that can be made based on the small number of individual case studies used in this analysis and to the study of radicalization in general. Radicalization is a highly individualized process and one that involves a relatively small number of people. These factors make definitive conclusions difficult. Furthermore, causal links cannot be established with a small data set, particularly when there are uncontrolled variables.

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## **CHAPTER 2 -**

### **BATTLE FOR INFLUENCE: A STUDY OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF INSPIRATIONAL TERRORIST LEADERS**

Throughout history, leaders have influenced and inspired individuals to act or to embrace a specific ideology. These leaders have espoused positive messages—Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi—and violent acts against civilian populations—Adolf Hitler and Osama Bin Laden. Inspirational leaders play a large role in radicalization to Islamic extremism and in the decision to use violence. Today, in the age of constant and widespread information and communication, inspirational leaders are particularly important in the radicalization of homegrown extremists in the West, because their inspirational and propaganda materials are available globally. Therefore, it is important to understand what traits and appeal inspirational leaders possess as a way to inform policy development and counter-radicalization strategy.

In this chapter, I examine the factors and characteristics one would expect to find in influential and inspirational Islamic extremist leaders even after they have died. I specifically examine *charisma*, *effective communication*, and *credibility and authority*, which are three characteristics and skills leaders, including extremist leaders, often possess. Based on a review of the literature, I expect to find that the inspirational leaders of Islamic extremist groups exhibit these characteristics regardless of when or where the leaders operate, including after they have died. However, there is reason to believe that these characteristics would not be present for deceased leaders. This is significant because it will allow us to better understand the reach of these leaders after they have died. Also, examining these characteristics will provide insight into how counter violent extremism (CVE) efforts can communicate effectively using some of the same tactics and characteristics of these leaders in the counter message. Furthermore, understanding the

characteristics deceased leaders possess will help determine what policies are necessary to stop their influence after they have died.

This chapter is composed of six sections. It begins with a review of the literature on inspirational leaders and the factors that make them influential. Second, it describes the structured, focused case study comparison methodology used to assess my argument using standard questions to extract the same information for comparison. Third, I provide a detailed explanation for the case studies selected – Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah Azzam – and examine the cases using the structured, focused case study comparison methodology described in section two. Fourth, I discuss the results and address similarities and differences between the two cases. I specifically address the fact that each of the leaders clearly exhibits charisma and establishes credibility, but effective communication is only partially demonstrated because unlike al-Awlaki, Abdullah Azzam does not include modern cultural references in his work. Fifth, I outline the policy implications for Western governments given the results of the analysis, specifically related to targeted killings and preventing violent extremism policies. Finally, the chapter concludes with my thoughts on inspirational leaders and the established characteristics, as well as questions for future research.

### **Assessing the Field: Leadership**

Most of the literature on Islamic extremism contends that inspirational leaders are crucial to the group, particularly for radicalization and recruitment.<sup>153</sup> However, some

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<sup>153</sup> Jarrett Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 52-78; Dipak Gupta, "Exploring roots of terrorism," in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, reality, and ways forward*, ed. Tore Bjorgo, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 19; Bruce Riedel and Christopher Boucek as quoted in Howard LaFranchi, "Anwar al-Awlaki Strike: Why It's Important, But Not a Death-Blow for Al Qaeda," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 30, 2011, accessed November 5, 2013.

scholars argue that inspirational leaders, while crucial to inspiring radicalization internationally, are not critical to the operation of the local group or affiliate.<sup>154</sup> Both arguments recognize the role of inspirational leaders in radicalization, and that role is what makes these leaders important and dangerous, not necessarily their operational position within the local group. These leaders are a threat because they inspire homegrown extremism and action, and they prompt individuals to travel to train with terrorist groups.<sup>155</sup> These types of leaders are a major source of new recruits and radicalization to Islamic extremism.

Few academic scholars or national governments, particularly Western governments, dispute the importance of inspirational leaders. However, there are some scholars and governments that doubt the necessity of these types of leaders to the survival of movements. For example, George Edwards in his study of charisma in U.S. presidential leadership proposes that leaders might be less important than generally thought with limited capabilities to sway the public.<sup>156</sup> Yet, Edwards' argument is based on an analysis of charisma looking at presidential approval ratings, and it is not applicable to inspirational terrorist leaders, whose primary role is radicalizing individuals and recruitment to embrace an ideology. The literature on presidential leadership is also

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<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2011/0930/Anwar-al-Awlaki-strike-why-it-s-important-but-not-a-death-blow-for-Al-Qaeda>; Mirra Noor Milla et al., "The impact of leader-follower interactions on the radicalization of terrorists: A case study of the Bali bombers," *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 16 (2013), accessed October 9, 2013, doi: 10.1111/ajsp.12007; Emmanuel Karagiannis, "European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization," *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13 (2012): 110, accessed September 18, 2013, doi: 10.1080/21567689.2012.659495.

<sup>154</sup> Bruce Reidel quoted in LaFranchi, "Anwar al-Awlaki Strike: Why It's Important, But Not a Death-Blow for Al Qaeda." Riedel was speaking specifically about al-Awlaki but with a concept that can be generalized and is applicable to all inspirational leaders.

<sup>155</sup> Jerome P. Bjelopera, "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating A Complex Threat," *Congressional Research Service: Report* (January 23, 2013): 19, 81. Faisal Shahzad being just one example. He was influenced by Awlaki's materials and sought training in Pakistan.

<sup>156</sup> George Edwards III, "Does the Messenger Matter? The Role of Charisma in Public Leadership," *Congress and the Presidency*. 29:1 (2002), 44.

not completely comparable because presidents last for a brief period of time before another leader is elected, and they are focused on winning elections for office and for the party; whereas, inspirational leaders persist for a longer period of time even after death and are not concerned with elections. Interestingly, the Yemeni government has argued that Anwar al-Awlaki, a well-known Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) inspirational leader, was not as important as portrayed by the United States.<sup>157</sup> In fact, the Yemeni government argues that the United States media's focus on al-Awlaki helped him as a recruiter and inspirational leader.<sup>158</sup> However, the Yemeni government's argument is not addressed within the scope of this analysis, which focuses on characteristics of inspirational leaders and not the media's role in assisting these leaders.

After a review of the literature on leadership with a focus on leaders within Islamic extremism, I found that the literature on inspirational leaders focuses on three characteristics and skills: charisma, effective communication, and credibility or authority.

### ***Charisma***

Throughout much of the literature, charisma is presented as a necessary characteristic of a leader, particularly for political leaders and terrorist leaders.<sup>159</sup> Jessica Stern, analyzing the root causes of terrorism, describes charismatic leaders as “inflaming

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<sup>157</sup> Laura Kasinof, “How Popular will Anwar al-Awlaki’s Latest Video Be?” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 2010. Accessed November 13, 2013. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2010/1108/How-popular-will-Anwar-al-Awlaki-s-latest-video-be>

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, “Economic Factors,” in *Addressing The Causes of Terrorism*. Club de Madrid Series on Democracy and Terrorism. Volume 1. March 2005; Jessica Stern, “Culture,” in *Addressing The Causes of Terrorism*. Club de Madrid Series on Democracy and Terrorism. Volume 1. March 2005; Jerrold Post, “Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship,” *Political Psychology*, 7:4 (1986): 675-688; Neil Smelser, *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 12; Edwards, “Does the Messenger Matter? The Role of Charisma in Public Leadership,” 25-26.

grievances and galvanizing support for a mission.”<sup>160</sup> Bjorgo argues that charismatic leaders are also crucial because they communicate an ideology and channel the grievances of a group “into a political agenda for violent struggle,” which is key to the formation and survival of a terrorist group.<sup>161</sup> Many scholars use “charismatic” as a descriptor of successful leaders without fully exploring what charismatic means in terms of action and communication or how charisma can be assessed.<sup>162</sup> However, Jerrold Post’s study on the charismatic leader-follower relationship is an exception, which looks at behavior and interaction and provides a basis for assessing charisma that can be applied to inspirational terrorist leaders.<sup>163</sup>

Jerrold Post contends that the charismatic leader is a “mirror hungry personality” and the followers are the “ideal-hungry personality.”<sup>164</sup> The mirror-hungry personality seeks “confirming and admiring responses to counteract their inner sense of worthlessness and lack of self-esteem,” and these individuals possess “feelings of grandiose omnipotence.”<sup>165</sup> The followers, or ideal-hungry personalities, seek to relate to a leader or individual “whom they can admire” and whom exhibits strength.<sup>166</sup> In seeking someone they can relate to or look up to, the followers are essentially looking for a role model and an identity.

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<sup>160</sup> Stern, “Culture,” 35.

<sup>161</sup> Ted Robert Gurr quoting Bjorgo in “Economic Factors,” 21; Smelser, *The Faces of Terrorism: Social and Psychological Dimensions*, 12.

<sup>162</sup> George Edwards touches on this point in his analysis of charisma as it applies to presidential leadership.

<sup>163</sup> Post, “Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship,” 675-688.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid 678-679. Post explains that these two personality types stem from the development of the “injured self,” which occurs when an individual is psychologically damaged during early development.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid 679-680.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

Post asserts that charismatic leaders use polarizing rhetoric or “polar absolutism,” which contributes to an “us vs. them” mentality.<sup>167</sup> Additionally, Post explains that these charismatic leaders often portray themselves and their followers – the “us” – as “being on the side of God” and portray the enemy or the opposing group as on the side of Satan.<sup>168</sup> The followers are drawn to the absolutism and certainty of these leaders.<sup>169</sup> These clearly defined boundaries and insider vs. outsider groups contribute to a sense of collective identity, which appeals to the ideal hungry personalities.

Isolated individuals are one of the groups Post highlights as being attracted to these leader-follower relationships, particularly because the polarizing rhetoric provides them with a collective identity.<sup>170</sup> The role of the followers as identity seekers is a common theme found throughout the literature exploring radicalization. This theme directly relates to an analysis conducted by Colonel John M. Venhaus, which examines the reasons why youth elect to join Al Qaeda.<sup>171</sup> Venhaus concluded that one of the main reasons that youth join Al Qaeda is for the sense of identity they gain from joining the group, including the acquired “structure, rules and perspective.”<sup>172</sup> Oliver Roy asserts that the creation of or search for an identity is an important factor drawing individuals to terrorist groups.<sup>173</sup> Additionally, Dipak Gupta asserts the importance of leaders in constructing the “us vs. them” message and corresponding collective identity.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>Post, “Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship,” 680-681.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid 680.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid 681.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid 685.

<sup>171</sup>Colonel John M. Venhaus, “Why Youth Join al-Qaeda,” United States Institute of Peace Special Report. May 2010, 10, Accessed July 24, 2013. <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf>

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Oliver Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 315.

<sup>174</sup> Gupta, “Exploring Roots of Terrorism,” 19.

Based on an analysis of the literature, a charismatic leader can be defined as someone who exhibits strength and utilizes polarizing discourse to create a collective identity for ideal hungry followers, who are seeking an identity. Charisma is based as much on the followers' perception and acceptance of the leader as it is on the characteristics of the leader.<sup>175</sup> Using these observations, I expect to find that the leaders in my case studies utilize polarizing language in their materials to project strength and a collective identity. This polarizing language will delineate clear boundaries for the seeking individual and will also include language that draws the individual into the "us" group.

### ***Effective Communication: Framing and Resonance***

Effective communication is key to the success of an inspirational leader because his/her primary role is conveying information. The theory and concepts surrounding effective communication have been widely studied as scholars examine the radicalization process. For the purposes of this analysis, effective communication encompasses the concepts of framing, resonance, and the ability to make material accessible to the audience.

Several scholars, and even fellow extremists emphasize a leader's ability to translate complex concepts into more accessible information and ideas.<sup>176</sup> Samir Khan, a radicalized American and editor of Al Qaeda's English language magazine, *Inspire*, was quoted as saying that Bin Laden and Zawahiri were "geniuses for having the ability to

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<sup>175</sup> Post, "Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship," 682.

<sup>176</sup> Brachman, *Global Jihadism*; Alice Locicero and Samuel Sinclair, "Terrorism and Terrorist Leaders: Insights from Developmental and Ecological Psychology," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 31 (2008): 227-250, accessed October 11, 2013. Doi: 10.1080/10576100701879638



mold their ideology into simple yet influential messages that can reach the grass-roots level.”<sup>177</sup> Locicero and Sinclair found that simplicity is appealing to some followers of extremist ideologies.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, Jarrett Brachman writes about Safar al-Hawali, a Saudi cleric arrested for religious activism, “what made Hawali so accessible and popular, however, was that he was able to take these often esoteric, complex and abstract religious ideas and apply them to the political and social realities of everyday life.”<sup>179</sup> This statement not only reflects the importance of turning complex ideas into simple messages, but also touches on the next two components of effective communication: framing and resonance.

The concepts of frames and framing were portrayed in the literature as an important tool or skill for inspirational leaders to master for effective communication and connection with individuals.<sup>180</sup> Both Wiktorowicz and Della Porta and Diani define frames as interpretative schemata that inform or determine how an individual perceives and understands information and events.<sup>181</sup> As Wiktorowicz states, frames are “interpretative schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events,” and framing is the “process of meaning construction.”<sup>182</sup> Frames

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<sup>177</sup> Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, “An Internet Jihad Aims at U.S. Viewers,” *The New York Times*, October 15, 2007, Accessed November 5, 2013.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/us/15net.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/15/us/15net.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&)

<sup>178</sup> Locicero and Sinclair, “Terrorism and Terrorist Leaders: Insights from Developmental and Ecological Psychology,” 245.

<sup>179</sup> Brachman, *Global Jihadism*, 54.

<sup>180</sup> Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” *Mediterranean Politics* 7, no. 3 (November 2002): 187-211; Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 74-88.

<sup>181</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” 203; Della Porta and Diani, 74.

<sup>182</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” 202. It is important to note here that Wiktorowicz clearly defines ideology and frames as distinctly different concepts. He describes ideology as a “relatively stable set of ideas that set parameters,” as opposed to frames which change (208).

are particularly important to leaders who are trying to mobilize individuals to collective action through frame alignment and communication of aligned grievances and strains.<sup>183</sup>

The ideology presented by the leaders must be articulated and presented in a framework that is understood by the potential audience. The presentation is key to the audience's interpretation of information or an ideology.

Frames must resonate with individuals to accomplish understanding and radicalization and ultimately collective action.<sup>184</sup> Resonance describes the audience's ability to relate to the material and the manner in which it is presented. Resonance is highly dependent on the incorporation of cultural references, understandable or familiar/local language, and identities or collective memories in frames.<sup>185</sup> Della Porta and Diani stress the importance of tying the ideology to the culture or environment.<sup>186</sup> They also write, frames "should resonate not only with their targets, but with the broader cultural structure in which a movement develops."<sup>187</sup> Resonance is closely related to the credibility of the messenger or leader, as I discuss in the next section.

Based on an analysis of the literature, I expect to find that the leaders under review will utilize cultural references and language tailored to their intended audience. I also expect the leader will use accessible language that clearly conveys information without becoming immersed in scholarly debate that would require a greater understanding or religious background.

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<sup>183</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research," 202, 205; Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 82.

<sup>184</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research," 202.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid 205.

<sup>186</sup> Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 81-82; Rhys Williams, "The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action," in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements* ed. David Snow et al. (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 105.

<sup>187</sup> Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 81; Williams, "The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action," 105.

### ***Credibility and Authority***

As discussed in the final chapter on credible counter-radicalization programs, credibility is crucial to any message or ideology. This same characteristic is applicable and crucial to inspirational terrorist leaders.<sup>188</sup> As Kouzes and Posner assert, “Credibility is the foundation of leadership.”<sup>189</sup> Generally, individuals want to follow leaders that they can trust and that have the knowledge or expertise to lead.<sup>190</sup> When applying this to inspirational leaders in Islamic extremism, this means that the leader has religious authority and knowledge to guide others, while also seeming logical and maintaining strong character.<sup>191</sup> Islam is generally decentralized and does not have a hierarchical structure; therefore, establishing credibility and authority is key and also more complicated because no overarching authority provides guidance.<sup>192</sup>

The literature highlights the importance of credibility for framing and resonance.<sup>193</sup> Wiktorowicz and Della Porta and Diani stress the need for well-formed messages projected by reputable and established leaders.<sup>194</sup> As Wiktorowicz asserts, “resonance depends upon...the reputation of the individual or group responsible for

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<sup>188</sup> Noor Milla et al, “The Impact of Leader-Follower Interactions on the Radicalization of Terrorists: A Case Study of the Bali Bombers,” 1; Quintan Wiktorowicz, “Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda’s Struggle for Sacred Authority,” *International Review of Social History*. Volume 49. December 2004, 163, accessed October 19, 2013. doi: 10.1017/S0020859004001683; Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” 205; Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 81.

<sup>189</sup> James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *Chapter 2.2 -The Leadership Challenge* (Online: Jossey-Bass, 2008).

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda’s Struggle for Sacred Authority,” 168.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid 160, 168.

<sup>193</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” 203; Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 81; Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An overview and Assessment.” *Annual Review Of Sociology* 26, (August 2000): 619.

<sup>194</sup> Della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 81.

articulating the frame.”<sup>195</sup> Without credibility the information conveyed will not resonate with an individual or group of individuals, no matter how charismatic the leader or well articulated the message.

Recognizing the importance of credibility and authority in Islamic extremism, particularly within Al Qaeda, Wiktorowicz performed a detailed analysis that examines the four framing methods that leaders employ to assert credibility.<sup>196</sup> The four methods for asserting credibility and authority are:

- vilification of rivals (name-calling, character attacks),
- exaltation of members within the group (emphasize positive and authority),
- credentialing of leaders within the group (emphasize expertise), and
- de-credentialing of rivals (attack experience and expertise).<sup>197</sup>

These four methods can be grouped into crediting to boost authority and credibility (exaltation and credentialing of members/leaders) and discrediting to harm the reputation of a rival and detract from the rival’s authority (vilification and de-credentialing of rivals or enemies).<sup>198</sup>

Wiktorowicz’s analysis is specific to intra-movement authority posturing between Al-Qaeda’s leaders and rival Islamic fundamentalist, who are opposed to indiscriminate violent action; however, the overarching concepts of framing methods to assert credibility can be applied beyond rival Islamic leaders.<sup>199</sup> In either application, the audience typically does not have the background to accurately assess and understand the religious

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<sup>195</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory: A New Direction for Research,” 203.

<sup>196</sup> Wiktorowicz, “Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda’s Struggle for Sacred Authority,” 159.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid 159, 165-167.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid 164.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid 159.

arguments and justifications put forth by the leaders, so they default to the reputation of the leader.<sup>200</sup> As Wiktorowicz asserts, “The credibility of the messenger is a necessary prerequisite for frame alignment.”<sup>201</sup> Therefore, framing to establish authority and credibility is key to inspirational leadership and greatly impacts frame alignment and resonance – effective communication – with the audience.<sup>202</sup> Based on this information on credibility, I expect the leaders will utilize one of the methods or a combination of the methods described by Wiktorowicz to establish credibility and authority.

### **Methodology: Structured, Focused Case Study Comparison**

For this analysis, I utilize a case study methodology that is slightly different than the methodology used in Chapter 1. I employ a structured, focused case study comparison as described by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett in *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*.<sup>203</sup> A structured, focused case study comparison utilizes a set of standardized questions to collect the same data for each case study, so that the scholar can easily compare the cases and establish findings.<sup>204</sup> The questions must revolve around the proposed theory and lead to the collection of information that is useful for analyzing the proposed question and comparing similar information.<sup>205</sup> Unlike individual case study techniques, this approach allows for a “systematic comparison” across the case studies of interest.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid 162.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid 164.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid 163-164.

<sup>203</sup> Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, “Case Studies and Theory Development in Social Sciences,” (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005) Chapters 3-4.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

Much of the literature on leadership chooses to examine one particular aspect or characteristic of leaders (e.g. charisma) rather than a comprehensive set of expectations and characteristics. Similarly, the literature on Islamic extremist leaders typically focuses on one leader and studies that particular leader in great detail. My investigation utilizes a unique methodology that allows for the direct comparison of leaders and tests the basis of a set of comprehensive characteristics. I utilize the following questions as a basis for examining and comparing the case studies:

1. **Leadership Importance** – Have terrorist plots or attacks been linked to the leader? How were the perpetrators exposed to the leader’s materials (YouTube, writings, personal contact)?
2. **Charisma** - Does the leader exhibit polarizing language to create an “us vs. them” environment for a collective identity? Did the leader create a collective identity and set of boundaries that would be appealing to an identity seeker?
3. **Framing** – Does the leader incorporate cultural references aimed at a particular audience? Is the material accessible or tailored for a less academic or scholarly oriented audience?
4. **Credibility/Authority** – What is the leader’s academic and religious background? How does each leader establish religious authority – resume, rhetoric?

#### **Terrorist Leader Case Studies**

The two case studies selected for analysis are Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah Azzam. Both are deceased, famous leaders within Islamic extremism who have been widely cited and connected to terrorist plots within the last fifteen years. For this analysis,

I define a connection to terrorist plots in two ways: a terrorist actor has referenced the leader as inspiration or guidance in his/her radicalization to violent extremism and willingness to act, or authorities have determined a terrorist actor has studied the leaders materials and/or had a form of communication. These case studies focus on plots around and after September 11, 2001. The post-mortem connection provides an interesting control variable because neither leader is active and producing materials. I have selected Anwar al-Awlaki because he has had a substantial impact on Western homegrown terrorism, particularly through his online inspirational materials. For my second case study, I have selected Sheikh Abdullah Azzam because his materials have been connected to Western radicalization and plots that extend beyond his death in 1989. Additionally, al-Awlaki followed Azzam, which adds an additional connection between the two leaders.<sup>207</sup>

### ***Anwar al-Awlaki***

Anwar al-Awlaki was an Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) leader, famously known as the “Bin Laden of the Internet.”<sup>208</sup> He was born in New Mexico in the U.S. and lived in the U.S. for twenty-one years of his life.<sup>209</sup> When Awlaki was seven years old his father moved the family back to Yemen because of his position as

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<sup>207</sup> Scott Shane and Souad Mekhennet, “Imam’s Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad,” *The New York Times*, May 8, 2010. Accessed November 5, 2013. [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/world/09awlaki.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/world/09awlaki.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0); Bruce Riedel, “The 9/11 Attacks Spiritual Father,” *The Daily Beast*, September 11, 2011. Accessed November 10, 2013. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/09/11/abdullah-azzam-spiritual-father-of-9-11-attacks-ideas-live-on.html>

<sup>208</sup> Aamer Madhani, “Cleric al-Awlaki Dubbed ‘Bin Laden of the Internet’,” *USA Today*, September 30, 2011. Accessed November 13, 2013. [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-08-25-1A\\_Awlaki25\\_CV\\_N.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/nation/2010-08-25-1A_Awlaki25_CV_N.htm)

<sup>209</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, “Imam’s Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad.”

agriculture minister within the Yemeni government.<sup>210</sup> In Yemen, he studied Islam as part of his education in his teenage years.<sup>211</sup> He then returned to the U.S. to pursue a degree in engineering and a Master's degree in education.<sup>212</sup> While in the U.S., Awlaki married and turned from his degrees to work as an imam at several mosques across the country from Denver to California to Virginia.<sup>213</sup>

Reports also conflict and give some indication that Awlaki might have had radical leanings during his time in the U.S.<sup>214</sup> Awlaki was investigated on two separate occasions by the FBI: first in 1999 for his ties to an alleged "procurement agent for Osama bin Laden" and again in 2000 for his connections to Omar Abdel Rahman, a "leading plotter" in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.<sup>215</sup> Neither investigation produced results to implicate Awlaki.<sup>216</sup> There are conflicting views on whether or not Awlaki was a member of Al Qaeda at the time of September 11, 2001 and played a role in the attacks because he had contact with two of the 9/11 hijackers and was vice president of an organization later deemed a front for Al Qaeda.<sup>217</sup> The FBI never obtained enough evidence to tie him to terrorist activity.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> *BBC News*, "Obituary: Anwar al-Awlaki," September 30, 2011. Accessed November 5, 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11658920>; Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

<sup>211</sup> *BBC News*, "Obituary: Anwar al-Awlaki."

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *BBC News*, "Obituary"; Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

<sup>214</sup> Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, (London, United Kingdom, 2011), 25.

<sup>215</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 26.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>217</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad;" Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 26.

<sup>218</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 27.



In 2002, Awlaki moved to the UK, where he was affiliated with Muslim-Brotherhood organizations.<sup>219</sup> During this time, he signaled his radicalization with his speeches to the youth about the threat of the West.<sup>220</sup> After struggling financially in the UK, he finally returned to Yemen in 2004, where he became a lecturer at a Sunni school.<sup>221</sup> In 2006-2007, Awlaki was imprisoned for an Al Qaeda kidnapping plot against a U.S. official.<sup>222</sup> The imprisonment was reportedly done at the urging of the U.S. government, and when he was released, he openly supported violence in his publications (e.g. 44 Ways to Support Jihad), videos and a multitude of online materials, including his newly established blog.<sup>223</sup> After this point, Awlaki became increasingly connected to terrorist attacks and plots throughout the West; he was eventually deemed part of Al Qaeda operations and put on a U.S. list of designated terrorists approved for targeted killings.<sup>224</sup> On September 30, 2011, Awlaki was killed in a U.S. drone strike.<sup>225</sup>

Awlaki was widely known throughout the West because of his U.S. citizenship and his ties to many plots and attacks in the West, particularly homegrown attacks in the U.S. and U.K. These attacks and plots include: the Times Square attempted bombing, the July 7, 2005 bombing in the London Underground, Roshonara Choudhry, the Christmas Day bomber, the Fort Hood shooting, and the Boston bombers.<sup>226</sup> Most of

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid 29. According to this report, Awlaki already had a presence in the U.K. but permanently moved in 2002.

<sup>221</sup> *BBC News*, "Obituary: Anwar al-Awlaki."

<sup>222</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 29.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid, 30; *BBC News*, "Obituary: Anwar al-Awlaki."

<sup>224</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

<sup>225</sup> *BBC News*, "Obituary: Anwar al-Awlaki";

<sup>226</sup> Ibid; Ellen Barry, "Suspect in Boston Bombing Talked Jihad in Russia," *The New York Times*, May 9, 2013. Accessed November 5, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/world/europe/in-russia-marathon-bombing-suspect-talked-jihad.html?pagewanted=2&ref=anwaralawlaki>; Vikram Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police interview extracts," *The Guardian* November 3, 2010, Accessed April 19, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2010/nov/03/roshonara-choudhry-police-interview>; "Anwar al-Awlaki's

these connected extremists found Awlaki's materials on the internet via his blog, YouTube videos and even through personal email communication.<sup>227</sup> Additionally, Awlaki played a key role in creating the AQAP English language magazine, *Inspire*, which is another way his followers connected to his materials.<sup>228</sup>

Awlaki's materials persist on the internet today even though his blog has been removed and some moderate websites have removed his materials.<sup>229</sup> Awlaki's materials spanned a variety of topics, so not all materials were focused on violence. Also, because he started out with moderate preaching, many individuals were familiar with his moderate pieces and questioned whether to keep his early materials after he transitioned to preaching prescriptions for violence and was designated a terrorist.<sup>230</sup> This is important because some individuals who followed him as a moderate might have not realized the gradual progression or the gradual progression might have made the transition to violent radicalization easier. A fellow imam from his former Virginia mosque said he advised individuals and shops to get rid of even the moderate materials because "It becomes a gateway for the unsuspecting."<sup>231</sup>

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Suspected Ties to Terror Plots," *The New York Times*, September 30, 2011. Accessed November 13, 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/09/30/world/middleeast/the-killing-of-anwar-al-awlaki.html>; Faisal Shahzad is the Times Square Bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab is the Christmas Day Bomber, Major Nidal Hasan was the Fort Hood Shooter and Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev were the Boston bombers. The Boston bombing occurred after Awlaki's death, but given his relatively recent death, it will be important to monitor plots linked to his materials.

<sup>227</sup>Jarrett Brachman and Alix Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!" *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Winter 2011. Vol. 35, 26. Accessed October 7, 2013. <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Fletcher-Forum/Archives/~media/Fletcher/Microsites/Fletcher%20Forum/PDFs/2011winter/Brachman-Levine.pdf>; Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*.

<sup>228</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 74.

<sup>229</sup>Margaret Coker, "Cleric Cited by Tsarnaev Lives On-Online," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2013. Accessed November 13, 2013.

<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323687604578465023366949366>

<sup>230</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad"; Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 6.

<sup>231</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

### ***Abdullah Azzam***

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam is often referred to as the “ideological father of Al Qaeda,” the “father of the modern global jihad,” or the “godfather of jihad.”<sup>232</sup> Azzam was an Islamic scholar and inspirational leader, who was born in the Palestinian West Bank and was greatly impacted by events with Israel, including the 1948 creation of Israel and the 1967 Six-Day War.<sup>233</sup> He joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and spent time in Cairo again at the height of militant activism (1971-1973), which increased his network and connected him to some of the most famous Islamists, including the family of Sayyid Qutb.<sup>234</sup> Despite his family’s protests, Azzam participated in “Palestinian Jihad” or guerilla warfare against Israel from 1967-1970, which gave him battlefield experience and credibility.<sup>235</sup>

Azzam was highly educated in Islam and Islamic law. He attended an Islamic law school in Damascus (1963-1966), received his Master’s in Islamic law from the prestigious Al-Azhar University (1968-1969), and earned his doctorate from Al-Azhar (1971-1973).<sup>236</sup> He also taught at many different schools and universities over the years

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<sup>232</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, “After Osama bin Laden Will Al Qaeda Survive?” *Strategic Currents: Issues in Human Security in Asia*. October 15, 2011, 126; Bruce Riedel, “The 9/11 Attacks’ Spiritual Father,” *The Daily Beast*, September 11, 2011. Accessed November 10, 2013.

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/09/11/abdullah-azzam-spiritual-father-of-9-11-attacks-ideas-live-on.html>; Thomas Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” in *Al Qaeda In Its Own Words*, edited by Giles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2008), 81. It is important to note that the literature on Abdullah Azzam is sparse compared to the large collection of information and literature on Anwar al-Awlaki.

<sup>233</sup> Riedel, “The 9/11 Attacks’ Spiritual Father,” Hegghammer, 84 -85. Azzam was indirectly impacted by the 1948 creation because his wife’s family had been forced to flee from their Palestinian home. The Six-Day War and Israeli occupation directly impacted Azzam because his family had to move to Jordan.

<sup>234</sup> Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” 82, 87. Azzam later became a member of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood advisory council (89).

<sup>235</sup> Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” 85. Hegghammer states that Azzam’s time with the Palestinian jihad might be overstated because he was still able to get a teaching position in Jordan after the PLO had been expelled from Jordan (87).

<sup>236</sup> Ibid 83.

in Jordan, in Saudi Arabia at the King Abdul Ibn Saud in 1980, and finally in Islamabad in 1981.<sup>237</sup> Azzam moved to Islamabad to join and assist the Afghan jihad after being motivated by Sheikh Kamal al-Sanani.<sup>238</sup> While stationed in Pakistan, Azzam traveled to Afghanistan in the early 1980s and spent time trying to recruit Arab volunteers to the fight.<sup>239</sup>

Azzam is credited for creating the ideology and structural framework for the global jihad building off of and moving beyond the disparate national struggles.<sup>240</sup> He led the drive for jihad to defend Muslims against the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan.<sup>241</sup> Azzam and Osama Bin Laden established the Service Bureau in Islamabad to facilitate international recruitment and training camps for Muslims trying to fight in Afghanistan.<sup>242</sup> Reports indicate that as many as 10,000 individuals were recruited.<sup>243</sup> Azzam traveled internationally and even established branches of the Service Bureau in the U.S. as part of his recruitment drive to bring Muslims to Afghanistan.<sup>244</sup> During this time he wrote *Defense of Muslim Lands* and *Join the Caravan*, which are two of his most famous works still in circulation today that describe a global “Islamist military defense effort” and justify jihad as a individual obligation.<sup>245</sup> These two famous works and other

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid 88, 90-91.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid 90-91.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid 92. Azzam’s recruitment efforts were mostly unsuccessful until he published *The Defense of Muslim Lands* and established the Service Bureau.

<sup>240</sup> Abdullah Azzam, “Join the Caravan,” in *The Canons of Jihad Terrorists’ Strategy for Defeating America*, edited by Jim Lacey, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 123,137; Hegghammer 97-98.

<sup>241</sup> Emmanuel Karagiannis, “European Converts to Islam: Mechanisms of Radicalization,” *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13:1, March 26, 2012, 110, accessed October 21, 2013, doi:10.1080/21567689.2012.659495.

<sup>242</sup> Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” 93.

<sup>243</sup> Jerrold Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 6.

<sup>244</sup> Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” 95.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid 81, 92.

recorded lectures and ideological pieces were widely circulated prior to Azzam's death and continue to be circulated today.<sup>246</sup>

In 1989, Azzam was assassinated in Pakistan, one year after Bin Laden formed Al Qaeda.<sup>247</sup> Reports have speculated that Bin Laden was responsible for his death because of their split in 1988 and divergent views on jihad.<sup>248</sup> Azzam's goal was to expel foreign occupiers and defend Muslim lands, focusing on Afghanistan.<sup>249</sup> However, Bin Laden and Zawahiri formed Al Qaeda and took a different turn targeting "false" and "corrupt" Muslim regimes as well as pursuing non-military targets and targets in non-Muslim countries.<sup>250</sup> Azzam did not call for attacks on "the territory of the faraway enemy" nor a "global insurrection," and his strategy was more aligned with guerilla warfare.<sup>251</sup>

Today, Azzam continues to be tied to plots as inspiration and there are even designated terrorist groups named after him.<sup>252</sup> He has been connected to recent plots and attacks, including: the 9/11 attackers, Faisal Shahzad, Roshonara Choudhry, and the 2009 suicide attack by a Jordanian agent on a CIA base.<sup>253</sup> Roshonara Choudhry stated he was a source of guidance and inspiration in her trial, which is particularly interesting given that she attacked twenty years after Azzam's death.<sup>254</sup> Terrorist groups around the

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid 95.

<sup>247</sup> Gunaratna, "After Osama bin Laden Will Al Qaeda Survive?" 126; Riedel, "The 9/11 Attacks' Spiritual Father."

<sup>248</sup> Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior*, 7; Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 96-98.

<sup>249</sup> Gunaratna, "After Osama bin Laden Will Al Qaeda Survive?" 126; Post, *Leaders and Their Followers in a Dangerous World: The Psychology of Political Behavior*, 7; Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 99. Azzam focused on the external enemy and developed a "territorial form of Islamism."

<sup>250</sup> Gunaratna, "After Osama bin Laden Will Al Qaeda Survive?" 126; Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 96-97.

<sup>251</sup> Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 101.

<sup>252</sup> "Terrorist Organization Profile: Battalion of the Martyr Abdullah Azzam," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism And Responses to Terrorism – University of Maryland, Accessed October 16, 2013, [http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data\\_collections/tops/terrorist\\_organization\\_profile.asp?id=4561](http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data_collections/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=4561)

<sup>253</sup> Riedel, "The 9/11 Attacks' Spiritual Father."

<sup>254</sup> Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police interview extracts."

world quote his work as inspiration and dedicate attacks to him.<sup>255</sup> According to news reports, videos of Azzam can still be accessed on extremist websites like “revolutionmuslim.”<sup>256</sup> This website has been taken down since the 2009 Choudhry attack on Member of Parliament Stephen Timms, but it is one example of how Azzam’s materials have continually resurfaced and been cited as inspiration or guidance even in an attack twenty years after his death.

## **Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

### *Charisma:*

Awlaki and Azzam are both often described as charismatic leaders without a greater description or analysis of what charisma means. An analysis illustrates that each leader’s language and narrative contributes to his magnetism.

Awlaki’s case conforms to the scholarly literature on charismatic leadership, particularly his ties to plots performed by identity-seekers and his language creating clear boundaries and a sense of certainty for identity-seekers. Awlaki depicts a world where the media and governments are all at war with Islam. For example, “On the political level...every single government in the world is in line to fight Islam.”<sup>257</sup> He leaves no room for uncertainty or for alternative arguments. This definitive language and boundary setting is evident in *Constants on the Path to Jihad* when he discusses the question he receives from the youth on which Islamic group to join, “The issue shouldn’t be

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<sup>255</sup>Riedel, “The 9/11 Attacks’ Spiritual Father.”

<sup>256</sup>Andrew Gilligan, “Radical Website Publishes MP ‘Death List,’ ” *The Telegraph*, November 4, 2010. Accessed November 10, 2013. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8111448/Radical-website-publishes-MP-death-list.html>

<sup>257</sup>Anwar al-Awlaki, “Constants on the Path to Jihad,” as quoted in Meleagrou-Hitchens, Alexander, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 60.

confusing at all, because this is the religion of Allah, and Allah has made it clear.”<sup>258</sup>

Awlaki is providing unambiguous and confident answers to the questions of young Western Muslims. This is critical to his appeal to young Western Muslims who are confused and trying to gain a better understanding of their religion as well as develop an identity.

Additionally, a review of Awlaki’s materials and videos demonstrates he clearly uses polarizing language to establish a collective identity. As he writes in “‘The Life and Times of Umar bin Khattab,’ Brothers and sisters...Umar told Ayaash, don’t believe them, they want to deceive you. The important lesson to learn here is never, ever trust the kuffar. Do not trust them.”<sup>259</sup> This excerpt illustrates Awlaki clearly defining an “us” vs. “them” mentality and delineating boundaries between the kuffar or unbelievers and Muslims. Awlaki also ensures that his message is inclusive, “I have socialized with some Islamic groups but did not find them taking interest in brotherhood the way I’ve found in Al Qaeda.”<sup>260</sup> This collective identity provides the structure and sense of belonging desired by the identity seekers.

Sheikh Abdullah Azzam’s case also adheres to the scholarly perspectives regarding charisma. Azzam clearly creates an us vs. them mentality and a collective identity united to confront the enemy oppressor and “protecting those who are oppressed.”<sup>261</sup> Azzam creates two defined groups: Muslims and the unbelievers.<sup>262</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Awlaki, “Constants on the Path to Jihad,” as quoted in Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 62.

<sup>259</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 48.

<sup>260</sup> Anwar al-Awlaki, “Why Did I Choose Al Qaeda?” *Inspire Magazine*, Fall 2011, Issue 8, 53. Accessed November 13, 2013. <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/inspire-magazine-8.pdf>

<sup>261</sup> Abdullah Azzam, “Join the Caravan,” in *The Canons of Jihad Terrorists’ Strategy for Defeating America*, edited by Jim Lacey, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2008), 124-125.

<sup>262</sup> Abdullah Azzam, “The Defense of Muslim Territories” in *Al Qaeda In Its Own Words*,

Additionally, he portrays the invaders of Afghanistan and Palestine as the enemy and those individuals who defend those lands from the invaders as a collective group that is not sinning.<sup>263</sup>

Azzam creates a collective identity of Muslims and then appeals to the audience to join the group and fulfill a duty to protect a victimized population.<sup>264</sup> In *Join the Caravan*, Azzam goes so far as to explain that “Jihad is a collective act of worship and every group must have a leader.”<sup>265</sup> Also, Azzam’s materials state that jihad is an individual obligation and they allude to the idea that an individual who participates in jihad can be a source of strength or a hero to those oppressed Muslims.<sup>266</sup> This would be an alluring concept for an identity seeker trying to establish a position or role within a group. The idea of jihad as an obligation would also give an identity seeker a clear sense of purpose and define their position within Islam and the political arena.

Azzam and Awlaki appeal to identity seekers today because of their community-oriented messages and collective identity. Also, both leaders use inclusive language incorporating collective pronouns like “us”, “we”, and “our” to create the shared identity and group.<sup>267</sup> This paired with each leader’s polarizing rhetoric is evidence that both leaders adhere to the scholarly perspectives on charisma beyond the general descriptor of charismatic.

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edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 106.

<sup>263</sup> Azzam, “The Defense of Muslim Territories,” 107.

<sup>264</sup> Azzam, “Join the Caravan,” 125.

<sup>265</sup> Azzam, “Join the Caravan,” 133.

<sup>266</sup> Azzam, “Join the Caravan,” 128, 130.

<sup>267</sup> Azzam, “The Defense of Muslim Territories,” 102-109; Anwar al-Awlaki, “The Dust Will Never Settle Down,” as quoted in Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 68.



*Effective Communication:*

Awlaki's case follows the literature on effective communication. Awlaki was a native English speaker, which meant he was able to effectively communicate with his audience in the West and even had an American accent as is evident in watching his YouTube videos. As Jarrett Brachman states, he appealed to a Western audience because of "his ability to combine religious doctrine with colloquial Western references."<sup>268</sup> Awlaki's use of colloquialisms and Western English references is evident throughout his materials. For example, Awlaki wrote, "Jihad is becoming as American as apple pie and as British as afternoon tea."<sup>269</sup> He also utilized current events and political references that would be familiar to his audience and, where possible, would tie directly to historical events from Islam. In "Constants on the Path to Jihad," he writes as though he is directly addressing Donald Rumsfeld's memo on the growth of the global jihad, "Well, Mr. Rumsfeld, the reason is because you are fighting al-Taifatul Mansura, which Allah promised that he will protect."<sup>270</sup> Perhaps more importantly, Awlaki was able to tie the Iraq and Afghanistan wars directly to the battles of the Prophet Muhammed.<sup>271</sup> These Western cultural and current event references assist in frame alignment and make resonance more likely because the readers are able to relate to the material.

In constructing his message, Awlaki simplified complex religious doctrine and "repackaged al-Qaeda's convoluted and inaccessible message" into more understandable material.<sup>272</sup> Awlaki's Western target audience did not (and still does not) have a deep understanding of Islam, so he was effective in speaking to them because his message was

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<sup>268</sup> Brachman and Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!" 26.

<sup>269</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

<sup>270</sup> Awlaki, "Constants on the Path to Jihad," as quoted in Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 64.

<sup>271</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

<sup>272</sup> Brachman and Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!" 26.

not overly academic or theoretical; whereas, he might not have been as effective in speaking to an audience with a deep and scholarly understanding of Islam.<sup>273</sup> His skill in making complex religious material accessible to the average audience adheres to the literature on influential leaders, and contrasts sharply with the highly academic writing of Azzam.

After reviewing Azzam's materials, it is clear that his writing does not entirely follow the scholarly literature for effective communication for the modern or Western audience because he does not utilize Western cultural references or colloquialisms and accessible language. However, the materials would have appealed to the audience and grievances at the time of his writing because it invokes references to Communism, the Red Army and the Soviet invasion.<sup>274</sup> In his piece, "To the Young Muslims of the United States," Azzam does appeal to the grievances of a confused young Muslim trying to balance religion with a more liberal cultural. For example, "God gave these centers [Muslim Arab Youth Association centers] the noble task of saving young people who run the risk of drowning in the stinking swamp of promiscuity."<sup>275</sup> Yet, even in this example, it is clear he does not use cultural references and colloquial language.

Azzam's language is much more academic and scholarly than that of Awlaki, and his writings invoke many Quran references without cultural framing or explanation to aid in understanding for those less educated in Islam.<sup>276</sup> It is not as accessible as the language and stories of Awlaki. Also, Azzam's materials had to be translated from Arabic, which

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid 28.

<sup>274</sup> Azzam, "Join the Caravan," 128-129, 131, 135.

<sup>275</sup> Abdullah Azzam, "'To the Young Muslims of the United States,'" in *Al Qaeda In Its Own Words*, edited by Gilles Kepel and Jean-Pierre Milelli, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 137.

<sup>276</sup> Azzam, "The Defense of Muslim Territories," 102-109; Azzam, "Join the Caravan," 123-137.

adds an additional layer of language complexity and means the materials do not have the same level of accessible English.<sup>277</sup>

A modern audience could have interpreted Azzam's references to Afghanistan as applicable to the grievances associated with the U.S. conflict and invasion. However, it is interesting that Azzam does not conform to the scholarly literature on simplifying and using accessible language with cultural references, yet he is still impacting modern Muslims and even individuals in the West. It is likely that his materials regarding Afghanistan and Palestine resonate with Muslims today because of the issues and conflicts in those regions. Since Azzam's materials do not fully conform to the scholarly literature on effective communication as examined in the literature review and yet he still finds an audience with modern Muslims, it leads to the question of whether his materials are being repackaged from their original production to accommodate different audiences or if the other two factors - charisma and credibility – play a larger role in his influence.

#### *Credibility:*

Awlaki's followers considered him a credible, religious authority even though he did not have battlefield experience or higher education in Islamic studies.<sup>278</sup> His email communication with Nidal Hasan is one example of the trust in his religious authority. Hasan emailed with Awlaki discussing the religious justification and authority for killing because "previous fatwas [were] vague and not definitive."<sup>279</sup> It is also important to note

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<sup>277</sup> Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 98.

<sup>278</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 7.

<sup>279</sup> Thomas Jocelyn, "Report Highlights Emails from Fort Hood Shooter to al Qaeda Cleric," *The Long War Journal*, July 20, 2012. Accessed November 12, 2013.  
[http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/report\\_highlights\\_em.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/report_highlights_em.php)

that even the U.S. government found that he was credible as is evident by his invitations to speak at the Pentagon in February 2002.<sup>280</sup>

Awlaki conforms to the literature on establishing credibility, particularly Wiktorowicz's explanation of discrediting adversaries to establish credibility.<sup>281</sup> Unlike Azzam, Awlaki lacked the expertise and advanced degrees in Islamic studies to establish credibility based on scholarly credentialing. Instead, he portrays himself in the same manner as past clerics and uses discrediting techniques, specifically vilification, against those who try to dispute his messages.<sup>282</sup> For example, he repeatedly calls non-Muslims, "kuffar," which is a derogatory term meaning infidel.<sup>283</sup> In "Constants on the Path to Jihad," Awlaki depicts a negative image of the different parties that are "at war with Islam", including Christianity and Judaism as well as various state governments.<sup>284</sup> These are just a few examples of vilification that Awlaki invokes to establish his credibility and to degrade the opposing side's reputation and credibility.

Also, Awlaki established credibility from his experiences, particularly his experiences living in the U.S. as a Muslim and the challenges associated with living in the West.<sup>285</sup> For example, he was quoted on a website as saying, "I eventually came to the conclusion that jihad against America is binding upon myself, just as it is binding on every other able Muslim."<sup>286</sup> His use of personal experience living in the West to

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<sup>280</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 40-41.

<sup>281</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," 164.

<sup>282</sup> Brachman and Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!" 27.

<sup>283</sup> Meleagrou-Hitchens, *As American as Apple Pie: How Anwar al-Awlaki Became the Face of Western Jihad*, 46, 48.

<sup>284</sup> Awlaki, "Constants on the Path of Jihad," 60.

<sup>285</sup> Brachman and Levine, "You Too Can Be Awlaki!" 43.

<sup>286</sup> Shane and Mekhennet, "Imam's Path from Condemning Terror to Preaching Jihad."

illustrate his credibility could also be interpreted as a form of credentialing as defined by Wiktorowicz.<sup>287</sup>

As illustrated in the case study, Azzam was a highly trained religious scholar with many degrees and an advanced degree from one of the most reputable religious schools. He also spent many years teaching at widely known and reputable universities.<sup>288</sup> His credibility and authority were built upon his academic expertise and credentials. His case fits within Wiktorowicz' academic theory that credibility can be built upon credentialing.<sup>289</sup> Also, Azzam's life experiences on the battlefield and growing up in Palestine during times of war contributed to his credentials.

Azzam derives much of his legitimacy from his academic and battlefield qualifications, but he also injected discrediting language into his written work. For example, he calls into question the reputation of those who might disagree with him on the topic of jihad as an individual obligation. He writes in *Join the Caravan*, "Whoever advises an able Muslim not to go for jihad is just like the one who advises him to eat in Ramadan while he is healthy..."<sup>290</sup> By attacking or de-credentialing potential opposing voices, Azzam enhances his credibility and authority on the subject of jihad.<sup>291</sup>

Even though Azzam and Awlaki have very different backgrounds, they each utilize a combination of credentialing and discrediting to support their authority in the subject matter. This confirms the literature on techniques to establish credibility and also

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<sup>287</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," 165-167.

<sup>288</sup> Hegghammer, "Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad," 81-101.

<sup>289</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," 165-167.

<sup>290</sup> Azzam, "Join the Caravan," 135.

<sup>291</sup> Wiktorowicz, "Framing Jihad: Intramovement Framing Contests and al-Qaeda's Struggle for Sacred Authority," 165-167.

emphasizes the importance of establishing credibility for the message to be accepted and legitimate.

### **Policy Implications**

The case study analysis of Abdullah Azzam and Anwar al-Awlaki determined in what ways leaders are essential to the survival of a movement and the characteristics that make them essential and influential. The findings indicate that the leaders' ability to communicate and resonate with individuals using polarizing language to create a collective identity and cultural references, as well as their ability to establish credibility on Islam are critical elements to the message, which should be incorporated into CVE and PVE communication efforts. Also, the case study analysis illustrates that these leaders exhibit many of these characteristics and are influential even after death; this finding indicates that targeted killings of inspirational leaders will not be entirely effective for neutralizing their impact if a CVE effort is not implemented to counter their message.

#### *Targeted Killing of Terrorist Leaders*

Inspirational leaders are difficult for policymakers to combat, particularly with the advent and growth of the internet and global communication technologies. The internet and global communication technologies carry the leader's messages internationally and the materials live on and duplicate. As Jarrett Brachman states, "The challenge for governments is not simply how to mute these hateful voices in the short term but how to deal with their legacies over the long term."<sup>292</sup> It is important to figure out how to combat these extremist inspirational leaders when they are alive and producing new

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<sup>292</sup> Brachman, *Global Jihadism*, 78.

material and communicating with potential recruits, but it is even more important to develop effective policy and strategies to decrease the appeal and effectiveness of the leader's message in the long-term, meaning after the leader has died.

A review of the case studies and the literature in the field provides contradicting views on the success of removing or killing leaders to degrade the terrorist network. Post's description of a charismatic leader-follower relationship implies that removing the leader could potentially have long term impacts on the leader's influence and reach on future audiences because the bond between leader and follower would no longer exist.<sup>293</sup> However, as the Azzam and Awlaki case studies indicate, the death of an inspirational leader does not mean the leader will stop influencing and inspiring individuals to radicalize. The leaders' materials endure, particularly with the internet and the current communication and information environment. As noted in the case study analysis, Azzam has been listed as inspiration in several terrorist radicalization cases, including to Roshonara Choudhry and the September 11, 2001 hijackers, even though these events took place many years after his death.<sup>294</sup> Similarly, Awlaki has been connected to the April 2013, Boston Bombing, which occurred two years after his death.<sup>295</sup>

Also, a deceased leader's materials are often reproduced and translated or even distorted and taken out of context to support a group's goals. As many scholars have indicated and as a review of Azzam's materials illustrates, Azzam would most likely not have approved of the current Al Qaeda ideology, which permits the killing of civilians

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<sup>293</sup> Post, "Narcissism and the Charismatic Leader-Follower Relationship," 675-688.

<sup>294</sup> Riedel, "The 9/11 Attacks' Spiritual Father"; Dodd, "Roshonara Choudhry: Police interview extracts." Roshonara Choudhry committed her attack 20 years after Azzam's death.

<sup>295</sup> Coker, "Cleric Cited by Tsarnaev Lives On-Online."

and violence outside of the battlefield to target the “faraway enemy.”<sup>296</sup> The Azzam case study demonstrates that the integrity of the leader’s material or the true meaning can be manipulated to serve a different cause or purpose. Based on this information and the evidence that a leader’s materials endure long after the leader has died, Western governments should explore counter-messaging or refuting propaganda and inaccurate interpretations by exposing the leader’s true meaning and inserting doubt into the material’s validity.

#### *Countering or Preventing Violent Extremism (CVE, PVE) Programs*

Western governments should take into account the characteristics that have made inspirational leaders effective when constructing counter-radicalization and counter-messaging efforts tailored to combat the threat posed by inspirational leaders. As the previous chapter on counter-radicalization programs established, credibility is crucial to an effective message. Messengers for counter-radicalization efforts should have the credentials to refute the terrorist message. These programs should use the same discrediting tactics terrorist leaders use to damage the credibility and authority of the authors and messengers of extremist materials. Also, counter-radicalization efforts should incorporate cultural references and construct frames that are accessible to the population both in content and language.

Charisma is the characteristic of inspirational leaders that is more difficult for Western counter-radicalization efforts to reproduce. Since charisma has been related to identity seekers, it is important to provide alternative groups for these individuals to join. As Venhaus proposes, government organizations and non-profit groups can create

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<sup>296</sup> Hegghammer, “Abdallah Azzam, The Imam of Jihad,” 101.



community service groups, sport teams and other activity related groups that provide structure and meaning for an identity seeker.<sup>297</sup> Furthermore, the counter-message provided through PVE programs could establish polarizing rhetoric that portrays the violent terrorist groups as the “them,” killing innocent civilians and violating the Quran. All of these characteristics of leaders should be considered for incorporation into new and existing PVE programs.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis illustrates that leaders exhibit three characteristics to some degree: charisma, effective communication and credibility/ authority. These three characteristics are crucial to the level of influence and connection each leader has with the population. With this knowledge, Western governments can incorporate the identified characteristics of influential terrorist leaders in the development and refinement of strategies and counter-radicalization programs to achieve a greater level of success. Western governments can also exploit the weaknesses in these characteristics after the leader has died to render the materials less effective.

However, this research also raises questions for future research. Are the legacies of deceased leaders really a threat or is the bigger issue that new leaders and individuals are re-packaging the materials of deceased leaders to meet their agenda and to spur the population? This is a very important question that could greatly impact counter-radicalization policies as well as policies on targeted killing of combatants. This is a question that will be best examined when more time has passed from Awlaki’s death.

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<sup>297</sup> Venhaus, “Why Youth Join al-Qaeda,” 11.

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## **CHAPTER 3 -**

### **BLAME THE MESSENGER: AN EXAMINATION OF COUNTER-RADICALIZATION PROGRAMS AND THE IMPACT OF A GOVERNMENT CONNECTION**

As the United States' military destroyed Al-Qaeda leadership and drove the network to decentralize for survival after September 11, 2001, Al-Qaeda turned to propaganda and radicalization tactics, particularly online, to recruit and instruct people to act internationally. In response, many countries established counter-radicalization programs to provide a counter-narrative to Al-Qaeda's propaganda and recruitment materials. Counter-radicalization programs have taken many forms and structures, targeting both domestic and international audiences. These programs utilize a variety of platforms, ranging from physical interaction to virtual conversations and publications. Some programs are run by think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and technology sector initiatives (i.e. Google Ideas), while others are government controlled or government initiated but administered by the local community (i.e. Viral Peace). Opposing views have emerged on the impact a close government connection has on a program's relationship with the intended audience or other individuals vulnerable to radicalization.

This paper argues that a close and evident government connection, negatively impacts the counter-radicalization program's relationship with the intended audience. Furthermore, this paper contends that the type of government involved influences how the government connection to the program is perceived. If the program is hosted in a Western, secular democracy, the connection to government will negatively impact how the audience views the program's message and potentially how they view the messengers. However, if the program is hosted in a country more closely tied to Islam or governed by Islamic law, the program will not suffer the same legitimacy and credibility issues because the government has more authority in Islam.



This chapter is organized into six sections. The first section reviews the literature on counter-radicalization programs with a focus on the government's role and impact, as well as messenger types. The second section proceeds to explain the structured, focused comparison methodology used to examine the argument and sets forth the questions used to conduct the structured comparison.<sup>298</sup> In the third section, case study selection is explained, and the three cases – Quilliam, PET Dialogue Forum, and the Sakinah Campaign – are analyzed using the structured comparison methodology and standardized questions. The fourth section discusses the findings of the case study analysis, and in the fifth section, potential policy implications for the United States are outlined. Finally, the conclusion offers closing thoughts on how a government connection can impact a counter-radicalization program and addresses the major findings.<sup>299</sup>

### **Assessing the Field: Counter-radicalization Efforts**

Most literature on counter-radicalization efforts contends that visible government association with these efforts negatively impacts legitimacy, or similarly, that independence from government involvement strengthens a program's legitimacy with its intended audience.<sup>300</sup> Howard Gambrell Clark emphasizes that independence from

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<sup>298</sup> Alexander George, and Andrew Bennett, "Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences," (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005) Chapters 3-4.

<sup>299</sup> Roadmap structure credit to – Ariel Roth, "Structure and Stability Reconsidered," *European Journal of International Relations*, October 7, 2010.

<sup>300</sup> Howard Gambrell Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, (Chicago: Light of New Orleans Publishing, 2010), Online Edition; Christopher Boucek, Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities, *Understanding Cyberspace as A Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 2009, accessed December 12, 2012, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2009/12/16/understanding-cyberspace-as-medium-for-radicalization-and-counter-radicalization/3s6c>; Todd Helmus, Erin York, and Peter Chalk (2013) *Promoting online voices for countering violent extremism*, RAND Corporation; Christopher Boucek, Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, *U.S. Strategy for Countering Jihadist Websites*, September 29, 2010, accessed December 12, 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2010/09/29/u.s.-strategy-for-countering-jihadist-websites/3ejp>

secular and Western governments is particularly important.<sup>301</sup> While specifically writing about U.S. efforts, Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, argue that government “is not the most effective conveyor” of counter-radicalization messages.<sup>302</sup> According to Alex Schmid, extremists might use a relationship with government to “undermine their [counter-radicalization program partners’] credibility” in debates.<sup>303</sup> Individuals within this school of thought, who find government involvement negatively impacts efforts and messaging, tend to focus on the role and benefits of private and non-governmental organization efforts.<sup>304</sup>

Many of these arguments use case study evidence to substantiate the claim that close government association hurts a counter-radicalization program’s relationship with the intended audience. Some authors use cases where the government has been closely allied and hurt the program’s credibility, and others demonstrate that an independent program has been relatively successful. Methods tend to be individual detailed case study analyses, brief descriptive examples, or multiple case study analyses without a structured comparative element.

This school of thought has very valid arguments and case study evidence, but the literature fails to fully examine if differences arise because of connections to different forms of government (secular vs. Islamic law) or the construction of the counter-radicalization program’s relationship with the government. Most authors agree that

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<sup>301</sup> Gambrell Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 114.

<sup>302</sup> Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, *Countering Online Radicalization in America*. Bipartisan Policy Center, December 2012. Accessed September 2014, <http://bipartisanpolicy.org/library/report/countering-online-radicalization-america-0>

<sup>303</sup> Alex P. Schmid. 2010. “The importance of countering al-qaeda's 'single narrative,’” In *Countering violent extremist narratives*, ed. National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (Netherlands), 51-52.

<sup>304</sup> Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace as A Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 2009; Boucek, *U.S. Strategy for Countering Jihadist Websites*, 2010; Helmus et al. *Promoting online voices for countering violent extremism*, 5.

association with a Western government will hurt a program, especially because Al-Qaeda's propaganda is so heavily directed against Western secular states. Yet, this poses the question of whether states with authority in Islam might not be impacted in the same manner. It is important to compare these two situations (connection with secular, Western vs. governed by Islamic law) because the outcome will indicate whether countries with different governments must develop different policies or program structures. Additionally, it is important to determine if the structure of the connection to government impacts the program. If a particular structure makes it less evident that the government is connected to the program and if that program is succeeding in positive engagement, that information will have useful policy implications.

Conversely, some government representatives and scholars find that the government can act as an effective messenger of counter-narratives without impacting the legitimacy of the message.<sup>305</sup> These individuals often cite the extremists' willingness to debate with individuals, whom they either know are government officials or believe are government officials, as a positive sign for counter-radicalization programs.<sup>306</sup> Richard LaBron, the former coordinator for the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications at the Department of State, believes extremist engagement signals that the Digital Outreach Team, whose members openly identify as government officials, has

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<sup>305</sup> Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. military goes online to rebut extremists' messages," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2011, accessed July 22, 2014. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/18/world/us-military-goes-online-to-rebut-extremists.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/18/world/us-military-goes-online-to-rebut-extremists.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0); Gilbert Ramsay, "Online arguments against al-Qaeda: An exploratory analysis," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6:1(March 2012): 66; Judith McHale and Richard LeBaron. "Digitally dissuading tomorrow's terrorists," *Politico*, September 16, 2012, accessed September 2014. [http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/81271\\_Page2.html](http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0912/81271_Page2.html)

<sup>306</sup> Shanker and Schmitt, "U.S. military goes online to rebut extremists' messages;" Ramsay, "Online arguments against al-Qaeda: An exploratory analysis," 66.

the ability to “hit a nerve” as messengers.<sup>307</sup> This is an interesting point of view that differs greatly from those that call for counter-radicalization efforts to be independent or distanced from the government. However, this perspective is typically based on discussions in chat rooms, whether positive or negative, and the ability for officials to chat with extremists online, and some officials have admitted the discussion is normally negative.<sup>308</sup> This perspective does not address how open government involvement could be affecting the legitimacy of the message and program. Engagement of any kind does not necessarily indicate legitimacy or progress with the intended audience.

In addition to discussing the role of government in counter-radicalization efforts, many authors detail the types of messengers, outside of government, that are most credible to the intended audience. Many assert that religious scholars and Muslim community leaders, including local leaders, are credible and trusted voices with an understanding of Islam.<sup>309</sup> Alex Schmid argues that “modern Muslims in Western Diasporas” should be the messengers because they are successful and well adjusted and can demonstrate engagement with the West while maintaining a Muslim culture and identity.<sup>310</sup> These messengers are crucial to the success of the program because of their knowledge and experiences.

Some individuals assert that former violent extremists are credible messengers, and several counter-radicalization programs, such as Google Ideas, employ former

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<sup>307</sup> Shanker and Schmitt, “U.S. military goes online to rebut extremists' messages,” McHale and LeBaron, “Digitally dissuading tomorrow's terrorists.”

<sup>308</sup> Ibid; Ramsay “Online arguments against al-Qaeda: An exploratory analysis.”

<sup>309</sup> Gambrell Clark *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 120; Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace as A Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 2009.

<sup>310</sup> Schmid, “The importance of countering al-qaeda's 'single narrative,’” 46.

extremists, which further exemplifies this perspective.<sup>311</sup> Others believe that victims of terrorist attacks can serve as credible messengers for counter-radicalization.<sup>312</sup> Each type of messenger proposed is supported by valid case study evidence, and some scholars even support multiples types of messengers; however, the literature does not analyze the various types of messengers across programs with different relationships to the government. For example, one type of messenger might be credible in an independent program or a program with anonymity but lose credibility in another program with a structure more closely tied to a government.

This chapter will determine credible messenger types and provide a new perspective on the argument that open government involvement in counter-radicalization efforts can negatively impact legitimacy and credibility. If my theory is true, I will find evidence in my case studies that points to a loss of credibility and engagement with the audience when a program is clearly linked to a government, particularly a secular government without authority in Islam. There are several other variables that can impact a program's connection with the intended audience, for example the content of the message, but this chapter's scope is limited to the impact of government.

Terms are used throughout this chapter that have been defined differently by various scholars in the field. For the purposes of this chapter, *construction* or *structure of the relationship* with government describes how the government is connected to the program (government funding, program administration, bystander, etc.) and to what degree is the connection known to the public or obscured from public view. *Legitimacy*

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<sup>311</sup> Gambrill Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 142. Helms et al. *Promoting online voices for countering violent extremism*, 10.

<sup>312</sup> Gambrill Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 160; Kean and Hamilton, *Countering Online Radicalization in America*, 35.

in this chapter means the program has the credibility and authority in Islam to be respected by the audience and to prompt positive engagement between the audience and the messengers. Also, *counter-radicalization* is defined as the efforts intended to prevent radicalization of vulnerable individuals and groups and any efforts intended to counter the violent extremist narrative.<sup>313</sup> Finally, the *intended audience* refers to those individuals searching for an identity or community or those searching for more information on Islam, either to expand their knowledge of their current religion or for the purposes of converting.

### **Methodology: Structured, Focused Case Study Comparison**

Similar to Chapter 2, I utilize a structured, focused case study comparison to examine my argument because it allows me to investigate a variety of different programs and obtain similar, comparable information for analysis. Other investigations of counter-radicalization efforts typically utilize a single case study approach or multiple case study analysis without a standard set of questions applied to each case. Both of these techniques are not conducive to performing a comparison. I utilize a different approach with the structured case study comparison, which allows me to compare the same information across case studies to test my theory.

I will ask the following six questions for each case study and analyze the findings:

- What is the structure of the counter-radicalization program?
- Who are the messengers of program's counter-narrative?

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<sup>313</sup> This definition of counter-radicalization was informed by Jessica Stern's definition of "prevention" and not her full definition of counter-radicalization, which includes deradicalization of detainees. Jessica Stern, "Deradicalization or Disengagement of Terrorists: Is it Possible?" Hoover Institution (2010), 1.

- Does the program receive government support and/or funding?
- What type of government is the program connected to or potentially connected to for support?
- Is the intended audience in the Muslim community aware of the support that the program receives from the government?
- Do people engage with the program's material and/or messengers? Are there any metrics of success?

### **Current Counter-radicalization Programs**

In order to test my theory, I have selected three counter-radicalization programs in three different countries for my case studies. The chosen programs are: the Sakinah Campaign in Saudi Arabia, the PET Dialogue Forum in Denmark, and the Quilliam Think-tank in Great Britain. I selected these case studies because each has a uniquely structured connection to the government and each has a different degree of perceived independence from the government. It is difficult to find an established counter-radicalization program that does not have some degree of government involvement; therefore, each of these three programs has some form of connection. This means that my analysis will not include any findings on completely independent programs and how those programs might compare to those with some form of government connection. I utilize programs from Western secular governments and a program from a country governed by Islamic Law to investigate if the difference in government impacts how the community perceives the connection to the government. Additionally, each of the programs has existed for a minimum of four years with the most recent, the Dialogue

Forum, starting in 2008, so the programs have established themselves within the community and feedback is available on how engagement is working.

*Sakinah Campaign (Al-Sakina)*

The Sakinah Campaign is a non-governmental organization that administers a website and an online counter-radicalization engagement program. The Sakinah Campaign, established in 2004, is structured into two interrelated branches, a research division and a division devoted to online counter-radicalization and engagement.<sup>314</sup> The research division supports the online volunteers that engage with the extremists by providing current and detailed research on extremist interpretations, justifications and ideology to make the counter-narrative stronger.<sup>315</sup> The online volunteers engage with extremists in Al-Qaeda related chat rooms and websites to refute extremist misinterpretations and justifications for violence.<sup>316</sup> The program also maintains English and Arabic websites with published chats between personnel and individuals questioning Islam and violent extremism, as well as other counter narrative and religious materials.<sup>317</sup>

Religious scholars and leaders, academic leaders, psychiatrists, sociologists, and former extremists serve as messengers for the Sakinah Campaign.<sup>318</sup> The program includes a separate women's section to engage online with any potential female extremists.<sup>319</sup> Some volunteers are associated with government ministries.<sup>320</sup> However, it

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<sup>314</sup> Bruce Falconer, "Al Qaeda, Online," Mother Jones, February 16, 2009. Accessed July 22, 2014. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2009/02/al-qaeda-online>

<sup>315</sup> Falconer, "Al Qaeda, Online;" Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace As A Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 4.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid. Gambrell Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 235.

<sup>318</sup> Falconer, "Al Qaeda, Online;" Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace As A Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 4.

<sup>319</sup> Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*.



is not clear if the identity of these messengers is always clearly announced online in their exchanges.

Two opposing schools of thought have emerged on the degree of the Sakinah Campaign's independence and support from the Saudi Arabian government. One side argues that the Sakinah Campaign is an independent NGO "loosely affiliated"<sup>321</sup> with and supported by the Saudi Arabian government (Boucek, Falconer).<sup>322</sup> This side argues that the organization's independent NGO status contributes to the program's "relative legitimacy" and leads more individuals to engage with the volunteers.<sup>323</sup> The opposing side contends that the Sakinah Campaign has a close association with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs or has been "adopted" by the Ministry.<sup>324</sup> This side argues that the close association with the Ministry hurts the Campaign's message and credibility.<sup>325</sup>

Both schools agree that the Ministry of Islamic Affairs supports the program in some form. Howard Gambrill Clark contends the program receives funding, while Christopher Boucek describes the relationship as "supported and encouraged" by the Ministry but does not explicitly state the type of support.<sup>326</sup> Boucek has said that "the opaque nature of the relationship is not unusual. Saudi Arabia is not a place where there are a lot of direct lines of control...the volunteers might be affiliated with a lot of different organizations and ministries, but that doesn't mean it has official government

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<sup>320</sup> Y. Yehoshua, "Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia," The Middle East Media Research Institute, January 18, 2006, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/804/1582.htm>

<sup>321</sup> Falconer, "Al Qaeda, Online."

<sup>322</sup> Boucek, Christopher, *Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Yehoshua, "Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia,"

<sup>325</sup> Gambrill Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 236.

<sup>326</sup> Gambrill Clark, *Revolt against al qa'ida*, 236; Boucek, *Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*, 4.

authorization.”<sup>327</sup> However, the unclear relationship could also be intentional to preserve the credibility of the program and messengers, which might otherwise be compromised by an open and clearly defined tie to the government through funding. Also, the program’s declared independence and status as an NGO helps the program maintain some distance from the government.

According to a translated interview with the program’s founder and former director, Abd Al-Mun’im Al-Mushawwah, in a Saudi Arabian newspaper, the Minister of Islamic Affairs provides material support and exercises some influence over the activity of the program.<sup>328</sup> However, the former director explains the program was started without government direction, and he stresses twice in the interview that the program is completely independent without government control.<sup>329</sup> He also declares “relations with the Minister are on an advisory basis.”<sup>330</sup>

The program is located in Saudi Arabia, which is an absolute monarchy governed by Islamic law - Sharia Law.<sup>331</sup> Saudi Arabia has a very strict interpretation of Sharia Law, and the King consults with religious scholars (ulama) on policy decisions.<sup>332</sup> Also, Saudi Arabian citizens are required to be Muslim, and the government controls the mosques and employs the imams.<sup>333</sup> The government is highly involved in the religion

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<sup>327</sup> Falconer, “Al Qaeda, Online.”

<sup>328</sup> Yehoshua, “Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia.”

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Yehoshua, “Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia.” It should be noted that this translated interview is the only source that clearly defines this level of support from the Saudi Arabian government.

<sup>331</sup> Library of Congress Country Study, “Saudi Arabia,” Accessed March 2013. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+sa0009\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sa0009)); CIA World Factbook, “Saudi Arabia,” Accessed March 2013; Toni Johnson and Lauren Vriens, “Islam: Governing Under Sharia,” Council on Foreign Relations, January 9, 2013, Accessed March 2013. <http://www.cfr.org/religion/islam-governing-under-sharia/p8034>

<sup>332</sup> Library of Congress Country Study, “Saudi Arabia.”

<sup>333</sup> Library of Congress Country Profile, “Saudi Arabia,” Accessed March 20, 2013. [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Saudi\\_Arabia.pdf](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Saudi_Arabia.pdf)

of the citizens and draws legitimacy from Islam.<sup>334</sup> The monarchy and royal family have considerable authority in interpreting Islam.

The level of connection and the nature of the relationship with the government are not completely clear because of conflicting information; therefore, the intended audience cannot draw a clear connection or determine how close the government is to the program. It is not clearly explained if participating government employees would identify as government officials or Sakinah personnel. There is a possibility that some individuals might question the program's relationship with the government, but citizen suspicion of the program is not widely written about or documented. However, this lack of documentation could be the result of tight government controls and a lack of openness from the Saudi government, which would have an interest in portraying the program as a success.

The Sakinah Campaign publishes the online exchanges with individuals on the program websites, which provides evidence that people are engaging with the messengers.<sup>335</sup> The Program claims to have turned 722 men and 155 women away from embracing violent extremism, but these metrics should be viewed with skepticism as they are self-reported and it is in the program's interest to reflect success.<sup>336</sup> Saudi Arabian newspapers have reported that the program has changed the beliefs of members of Al-Qaeda.<sup>337</sup> A less bias measure of success is the interest from other countries in the program's structure and methods with the United States being one of the interested

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<sup>334</sup> Johnson and Vriens, "Islam: Governing Under Sharia."

<sup>335</sup> Falconer, "Al Qaeda, Online."

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Yehoshua, "Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia."

countries.<sup>338</sup> This interest from other countries indicates that others deem the program to be successful.

*Danish Security and Intelligence Service's (PET) Dialogue Forum*

In 2008, the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) launched the Dialogue Forum against militant extremism as part of their larger counter-radicalization efforts; this is around the same time the PET noted a rise in the terrorist threat in Denmark.<sup>339</sup> PET's Centre for Prevention personnel organize biannual meetings on a regular basis with selected Muslim community leaders, including imams, teachers, housing associations, and welfare professionals.<sup>340</sup> The Danish government believes these Muslim community leaders interact the most with individuals at risk of radicalization.<sup>341</sup> All invited participants must not engage in violence or encourage violence.<sup>342</sup> The program strives to bring together individuals to engage in discussion and "disagreeing dialogue,"<sup>343</sup> or debate, while promoting understanding of PET's policies for in countering radicalization and terrorism.<sup>344</sup> The program also facilitates a level of trust and communication between government officials and community leaders,

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<sup>338</sup> Boucek *Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization*.

<sup>339</sup> Julian Brett, "Recent Danish Counterradicalization Initiatives: A case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum," *Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation* (April 2012); Danish Security and Intelligence Service Website, <https://www.pet.dk/English/About%20PET.aspx>

<sup>340</sup> Brett, "Recent Danish Counterradicalization Initiatives: A Case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum;" Government of Denmark, *A common and safe future: An action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people* (2009), 17; PET Centre for Prevention Website. Accessed March 20, 2013. <https://www.pet.dk/English>

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> PET Centre for Prevention Website.

<sup>343</sup> Government of Denmark, *A common and safe future: An action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people*, 17.

<sup>344</sup> Brett, "Recent Danish Counter radicalization Initiatives: A Case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum," 3.

so that community leaders can help formulate effective counter-radicalization efforts.<sup>345</sup>

PET also brings in subject matter experts to participate in some discussions to “challenge narratives through evidence based discussion.”<sup>346</sup> The purpose of these discussions is to provide the community leaders with accurate information to include in their discussion with individuals from their communities and to educate them about radicalization.

The messengers for the program are the Muslim community leaders and participants that engage in the Dialogue Forum meetings, not the PET personnel. Participant names and all discussion topics are kept anonymous and secret to protect participants from potential negative impacts.<sup>347</sup> These individuals return to their local communities with the information and new perspectives they have gained from the Forum, and they incorporate that information into their interactions with community members.

The Dialogue Forum is a program organized, funded and facilitated by the Danish Intelligence and Security Service. The government openly acknowledges the program and describes it in a brief segment on their website.<sup>348</sup> A budget or allocation amount is not listed on the Centre for Prevention website or the PET website, but the connection to government is not hidden.

The counter-radicalization program is connected to the Danish government, which is a constitutional monarchy with a civil law legal system.<sup>349</sup> Denmark practices

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Brett, “Recent Danish Counter radicalization Initiatives: A case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum,” 4.

<sup>348</sup> Centre for Prevention website.

<sup>349</sup> CIA World Factbook, “Denmark,” Accessed March 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/da.html>

democracy and exercises freedom of religion.<sup>350</sup> It is a secular country without involvement or authority in a particular religion. All religions are respected and citizens can elect to participate in any religion.<sup>351</sup> The government does not draw legitimacy from religion.

As noted earlier, the government acknowledges the Dialogue Forum, but the participant list is anonymous and the discussion topics are kept secret.<sup>352</sup> Open source research yields little information on the program due to its anonymous nature.<sup>353</sup> Therefore, the intended audience does not know who the messengers are unless the messengers choose to identify themselves as participants in the meetings. Julian Brett's interviews with program participants revealed that some have told community members about their participation in the Dialogue Forum meetings, which at times sparked larger discussions on counter-radicalization.<sup>354</sup> Additionally, the program maintains anonymity and secrecy to avoid becoming a "political platform."<sup>355</sup>

Due to the anonymity of the messengers and the sensitivity around the program, the messengers cannot be traced, so it is difficult to measure engagement between the messengers and the intended audience. However, Julian Brett's interviews with participants in the program provide insight into the success of the program. Many individuals interviewed were open with their participation and only one reported

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<sup>350</sup> Government of Denmark. *A common and safe future: An action plan to prevent extremist views and radicalisation among young people*, 4.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Brett, "Recent Danish Counter radicalization Initiatives: A case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum," 1.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid. Through my own experience researching the program, it was also evident very little public information exists on the program. Julian Brett's interviews with participants provide the only information on engagement and success. For the purposes of the data requirements in this case study, the information on the PET website and Julian Brett's interviews is sufficient.

<sup>354</sup> Brett, "Recent Danish Counter radicalization Initiatives: A case Study on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's Dialogue Forum," 4.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid 7.

encountering a negative reaction.<sup>356</sup> Additionally, the program has been meeting for over four years and continues to have regular participation from the selected leaders, which indicates the participants (messengers) find the program and information to be valuable.<sup>357</sup> Participants have expressed that the discussions on Danish foreign policy have been very helpful and informative, and many individuals expressed that the interaction among participants was very beneficial.<sup>358</sup>

### *Quilliam*

Quilliam is a counter extremism think tank founded by former Islamic extremists in Great Britain to challenge violent extremist material and interpretations of Islam.<sup>359</sup> Quilliam's objective is to "inspire new thought-trends for existing grassroots bodies," and the staff utilizes a variety of techniques to broadcast their research and counter-narratives.<sup>360</sup> Personnel conduct events and outreach at universities and community centers presenting their papers and research findings as well as engaging in debates.<sup>361</sup> The think-tank maintains a blog and regularly produces publications and press releases, and Quilliam's leaders have also made high-profile media appearances.<sup>362</sup> All of these products and events are directed at four audiences with different goals. Governments are targeted to influence counter terrorism and counter extremism policy, and Quilliam targets the media to enhance and inform their coverage of terrorism topics.<sup>363</sup> The third

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid 4.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid 6.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid 5.

<sup>359</sup> Quilliam Website, Accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/about/>

<sup>360</sup> Quilliam Website, Accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/about/faqs/>

<sup>361</sup> Quilliam Website - Publications, Outreach, In the Media sections, Accessed May 4, 2013. <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/#>

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

target audience is “non-Islamist civil society” to educate them on the “difference between Islamism and Islam.”<sup>364</sup> Finally, Quilliam targets extremists groups and individuals following extremist ideologies with a goal to “undermine their networks, communication strategies and their political ideologies.”<sup>365</sup> This last target audience is particularly important for counter-radicalization. Quilliam challenges extremist ideology and interpretations and presents a counter-narrative.

The messengers and authors of the Quilliam products and counter-narrative are a diverse group of individuals. The staff includes ex-extremists and ex-Islamists, academic scholars, and religious scholars. Also, Quilliam is open to people of a variety of religions.<sup>366</sup> A review of staff biographies illustrates that most of the personnel have a history involving Islamism and many of them are first and second generation British citizens.<sup>367</sup>

Quilliam has a direct connection to the government through funding and consulting work. The program is funded by private donations and government grants.<sup>368</sup> Quilliam received nearly one million pounds in grant funds from the British government in 2009 - 660,000 from the Home Office, 140,000 from the Foreign Office and another 100,000 from the Home Office in the following fiscal year.<sup>369</sup> The program had the potential to receive additional funding based on performance and progress.<sup>370</sup> Quilliam personnel also consult for the government, specifically on counter-extremism for the

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Quilliam Website - Staff, Accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/about/staff/>

<sup>368</sup> Quilliam Website, Accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/about/faqs/>

<sup>369</sup> Richard Kerbaj, “Government gives £1m to anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam Foundation,” *The Times*, January 20, 2009. Access March 2013. <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article2026766.ece>

<sup>370</sup> Quilliam Website; Kerbaj, “Government gives £1m to anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam Foundation.”



security divisions.<sup>371</sup> Yet, Quilliam leadership contends the program is independent from political parties and from influence on their research.<sup>372</sup>

The British government is a constitutional monarchy with a common law legal system.<sup>373</sup> It is a secular government and does not draw legitimacy from religion. The British government and citizens emphasize democratic values and principals, which includes the freedom of religion. The government respects all religions and does not have authority in any particular religion. Beyond religion, the British government is closely allied with the United States and traditionally perceived as part of the secular Western democracies.

The intended audience is fully aware of the program's connection to the government through funding and advising work. Both topics are openly discussed and found on the Quilliam's website and published in news material. Recent reports on the Quilliam Foundation indicate that the association with the government has harmed the Foundation's reputation and credibility with the intended audience. A representative from the Muslim Council of Britain called them "a government stooge" with "very little credibility among British Muslims."<sup>374</sup> A 2009 piece in *The Times* quotes a government minister as stating that Quilliam has "very little support in the mainstream Muslim community" and that "the Government knows if you want a Muslim to say pro-government things, then Quilliam is the answer."<sup>375</sup> Both quotes indicate the program has lost credibility as an independent source and counter-narrative.

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Quilliam Website, Accessed May 4, 2013, <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/about/faqs/>

<sup>373</sup> CIA World Factbook, "United Kingdom," Accessed March 2013.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/uk.html>

<sup>374</sup> Kerbaj, "Government gives £1m to anti-extremist think-tank Quilliam Foundation."

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

Quilliam also lost credibility and support with the intended Muslim audience due to close ties with right wing media and political parties.<sup>376</sup> The right wing media is unpopular with the mainstream Muslim audience because they traditionally are associated with being “anti-multicultural” and stating negative “criticism of Muslims.”<sup>377</sup> Muslim audiences associate Quilliam with the government and the right wing media and no longer judge them to be relatable and credible. These reports and criticisms of Quilliam suggest that the counter-narrative and counter-radicalization portion of the program meant to undermine Islamic extremist ideology are not engaging the intended audience because they have lost legitimacy and independence.

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<sup>376</sup> H. A. Hellyer, “Pursuant to prevent: British community counterterrorism strategy: Past, present, and future,” *Institute for Social Policy and Understanding*, July 2011, 24. Accessed March 2013.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1: Counter-Radicalization Program Case Study Comparison**

Data Requirement Question	Sakinah Campaign	PET Dialogue Forum	Quilliam
Structure of Program?	Independent NGO with online engagement program and research division	Biannual In-person Meetings with Anonymous Community Leaders	Independent Counter-extremism Think-tank: conduct events/debates, write research papers, outreach, media appearance and press releases/publications
Messengers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religious scholars and leaders</li> <li>- Former extremists</li> </ul>	Anonymous local community leader participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Former extremists</li> <li>- Academic Scholars</li> <li>- Religious Scholars</li> </ul>
Gov. Funding or Support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receives Gov. Support</li> <li>- Funding (conflicting views)</li> <li>- Opaque relationship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gov. Administered Program</li> <li>- Receives Gov. Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receives Gov. Funding</li> <li>- Consults for the Gov.</li> </ul>
Type of Gov.?	Absolute Monarchy Governed by Islamic Law	Constitutional Monarchy, Democracy	Constitutional Monarchy, Democracy
Audience Aware of Support?	Level of support and nature of relationship with Gov. unclear so the audience cannot draw a clear connection	Gov. openly acknowledges the program but participants are anonymous so the audience cannot draw a clear connection	Audience fully aware of program's funding and ties to the gov.
Positive Engagement? Success Metrics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publish dialogues</li> <li>- Program reported stats: prevented 722 men and 155 women</li> <li>- Interest from other countries in program structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants view as successful and valuable</li> <li>- Many participants open about participation and only one received negative response</li> <li>- Leaders continue to participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lost credibility and support due to gov. and media ties</li> </ul>

## **Discussion of Case Study Findings**

### *Clarity of Government Connection*

As Table 1 illustrates, all three cases examined receive government support and funding to some extent, whether the program is run through the government or receives government support. The level of visible connection to the government and the structure of that relationship are what make the three programs different. A comparison of the three case studies reveals that problems arise when the intended audience can draw a clear and traceable relationship between a secular government and a counter-radicalization program's *messengers*. For example, Quilliam appears to have suffered the most from a legitimacy problem and they have the clearest and most publicized connection to government through funding and consulting. The PET Dialogue Forum is a government program but the messengers cannot be directly traced back to the program or the government, so the messengers have continued to successfully engage with the target audience. The Sakinah Campaign also receives government support but conflicting information on the level and type of support keeps the program's relationship with the government uncertain, which could be intentional to maintain credibility of the program or could simply be a result of the governance style.

The media and publicity of the program also impact the degree of visibility of the government connection. A comparison of the case studies, summarized in Table 1, indicates that the more publicity a program received and the more involved with the media, the more issues the program had with maintaining legitimacy and connecting with the audience because it became more obvious that the program and messengers were connected to the government. This was particularly evident in programs located in

Western secular countries with freedom of the press and a more open internet. The PET Dialogue Forum is not covered in the media and very little information is available about the program on the internet, and they maintain a successful level of engagement. On the other hand, Quilliam is widely covered in the media and even acknowledges targeting the media, and Quilliam's engagement with the target audience has suffered. The Sakinah Program is covered in the media, but much of the media's information is controlled by the Saudi Arabian government or is obscure enough to make the connection to the government unclear.

### *Messengers*

The Sakinah Campaign and Quilliam both utilize ex-Islamic extremists and religious authorities or scholars as messengers. For the Sakinah Campaign, these types of messengers seem to be working to engage potential extremists, particularly when paired with the consistently updated research on violent extremist justifications and interpretations. Sakinah's published conversations and accounts of chat room discussions provide evidence for this engagement, but they should be viewed with some skepticism since it is in the best interest of the program to promote successes. For Quilliam, the use of the exact same types of messengers is failing to engage the targeted potential extremists and those individuals and groups already adhering to an extremist ideology. The failure stems from the larger issue of the program's connection to the British government and particularly the founders' perceived ties to both right wing media and politics. With the program negatively connected to the government, the messengers, who openly identify as Quilliam scholars, are then negatively associated with the government.

The PET Dialogue Forum works with community leaders – religious leaders, teachers, etc.- who then become messengers within their own communities and organizations. These messengers are already engaging with the intended audience in their everyday positions, and they are not clearly tied to the government-funded program. The participants also are not necessarily given a scripted message or platform but are provided with information and exposed to ideas that help them develop their own arguments and message for use in their communities. In this way, the government is seen more as a facilitator of discussion.

#### *Quilliam vs. Sakinah Campaign*

Out of the three case studies examined, the Sakinah Campaign and Quilliam have the most similarities in terms of structural connection to the government (see Table 1 above for summary and comparison of the two cases). The Sakinah Campaign and Quilliam are both NGO's that receive some level of government support and funding, yet they have different levels of success in engaging with their intended audiences and Muslim communities. The evidence on audience engagement described above suggests that the Sakinah Campaign is more successful in maintaining legitimacy and engaging with the intended audience. Conversely, Quilliam struggles to engage with the Muslim community and the target audience even though they are able to successfully interact with their other two target audiences, the government and the media.

One factor that contributes to the differences in engagement between these two programs is the transparency of the program's relationship with the government. Quilliam's government funding and consulting work is clearly documented in the media,

on the web, and in government documents. Even the program's funding amounts are listed for public consumption. The Sakinah Campaign's relationship with the government is less documented and somewhat less transparent in the connection between the messengers and the government. As indicated during the case study, scholars studying the Sakinah Campaign seem to disagree over the level of independence the program has from the government and the type of support it receives. After exploring evidence on the Sakinah Campaign, one interview with a former Director of the Campaign portrayed a closer connection to government. The lack of clarity and publicity surrounding the program's connection to the government could be intentional to preserve the program's independent status. Furthermore, the specific types of material support and possible funding the Sakinah Campaign receives are never clearly documented for public consumption like Quilliam's funding amounts.

Perhaps more importantly, the two programs reside in countries with very different forms of government, which could explain the difference in the level of credibility and engagement with the intended audience. Saudi Arabia's government follows Islamic law and therefore, has greater knowledge and authority in Islam. The British government is secular and seen as part of the West with no connection or authority in Islam. The Sakinah Campaign appears to maintain more credibility and positive engagement with the audience than Quilliam because the government draws legitimacy and authority from Islam.

### **Potential Policy Implications for the United States**

The findings are informative for the United States government as agencies work to develop and refine their counter-radicalization efforts. According to the case study findings, as a Western secular government, the United States should strive to formulate

programs that mask government involvement or at least protect the identities of the messengers working with the government. As the case study results illustrate, it is not the government's connection to the program that appears to be crucial to legitimacy but instead it is the government's connection with the messenger delivering the counter-narrative that is important.

There are also immediate policy implications for counter-radicalization programs the United States already has in place. For example, two of our international counter-radicalization efforts, the Digital Outreach Team from the Department of State and the Digital Engagement Team based out of Central Command (CENTCOM), openly identify as United States government and CENTCOM employees.<sup>378</sup> Based on the findings from the case studies, the clear connection between the messengers (members of each team) and the United States government could be negatively impacting the connection they have with the intended audience in the chat rooms and websites they visit. The greater the distance the government can put between itself and the messengers, the more likely the program will experience positive engagement with individuals.

Non-governmental organizations can also draw lessons from the findings, particularly those findings related to the Sakinah Campaign and Quilliam. Openly accepting government funding in Western, secular states can drastically impact a program's credibility with the intended audience, particularly if the program is seen as aligned with a particular political wing. Funding is not as much of an issue in the United States because the government cannot openly fund NGOs that appear to be supporting a

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<sup>378</sup> Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Military Goes Online to Rebut Extremists' Messages," *The New York Times*, November 17, 2011, Accessed March 2013. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/18/world/us-military-goes-online-to-rebut-extremists.html?pagewanted=all>; Department of State - Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications Website, <http://www.state.gov/r/csc/index.htm>



particular interpretation of Islam or any religion.<sup>379</sup> However, other forms of government support, such as praise or any type of publicized connection, will harm the program and should be considered by the NGO. Non-governmental organizations in secular, Western countries will achieve better results if they maintain political neutrality and distance from the government.

I was not able to control for the type of messenger delivering the counter-narrative across the case studies. Therefore, I could not draw clear policy implications for whether the messenger type matters and what types of messengers possess the greatest credibility and are most effective in conveying a counter-message. However, I was able to determine that local community leaders, as used in PET Dialogue Forum, and ex-Islamic extremists and religious authorities have the potential to be effective messengers when not clearly connected to the government. This analysis illustrates potential messenger options and also indicates that Western governments would benefit from acting behind the scenes in a facilitator role rather than openly using employees as messengers. This information should be taken into consideration when designing and developing counter-radicalization efforts.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of this paper partially support the argument that an obvious connection between the government and a counter-radicalization program negatively impacts the relationship the program has with its intended audience. However, the findings indicate that an apparent connection between the government and the *messengers* is what actually impacts the audience, not the connection with the program in general. When the audience could not identify which individuals or messengers were

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<sup>379</sup> Helmus et al. *Promoting online voices for countering violent extremism*.

connected to the government, as was the case for the PET Dialogue Forum, the program was successful in maintaining legitimacy and engaging in positive interactions.

Conversely, those messengers that were clearly connected to the government suffered legitimacy issues and failed to produce positive engagement, as the Quilliam case study exemplifies.

Additionally, the case study comparison and findings support the argument that the type of government involved in the connection impacts how the audience perceives a program. The comparison between the Sakinah Campaign and Quilliam proves this theory. Quilliam, tied to a secular Western government, was negatively impacted by an apparent government connection, whereas the Sakinah Campaign, which is tied to the government to some uncertain degree, did not suffer the same credibility and engagement issues.

Counter-radicalization programs will continue to be an important element of combating the terrorist threat, particularly since homegrown terrorism has increased in Western countries. Based on these findings, messengers for counter-radicalization programs in Western, secular countries should not be openly tied to the government. More attention should be focused on developing program structures that distance the messengers from these governments while maintaining the intent and effort. This is not to say that Western governments should not initiate or administer counter-radicalization programs, but the programs must take into account these structural considerations. The United States should take this into consideration when evaluating current program progress and future counter-radicalization efforts.

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## CONCLUSION

Since the attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States has taken significant steps to counter terrorism with emphasis internationally on military force and domestically on policing and intelligence efforts. However, it is important that the United States focus more on the actual radicalization process, prior to an individual reaching the point of violent extremism and engaging in terrorist activity, in *addition* to the current kinetic and policing efforts. The United States has developed some efforts to counter and prevent radicalization, but these efforts must be increased and enhanced to more effectively stem the process leading to violent extremism. The United States currently expends a large amount of resources on countering terrorist attacks through defense and protective measures and a relatively small amount on combating the radicalization process that leads up to the terrorist attack. The United States must strike a greater balance in the attention and resources allocated to these two areas, or the security community will continue to be reactive to the issue of terrorism rather than proactive in preventing radicalization to violent extremism.

### *Overview of Findings*

The first chapter was an analysis of female motivations to radicalize to violent extremism. This included an assessment of the literature on female motivations to determine the main theories and an evaluation of the applicability of these theories to four Western female case studies – Muriel Degauque, Roshonara Choudhry, Malika El Aroud, and Colleen LaRose. The four broad categories within the literature were: political, religious, coercion and personal. Personal motivations consisted of revenge and grief,

trauma, regaining honor, and struggling for equality. The case study findings clearly demonstrated that trauma, particularly secondary traumatization, is a key motivator to violent extremism and is linked to a motivation to obtain revenge for the victimized - perceived or actual - group. The analysis also indicated that regaining honor, a motivation typically attributed to societies with strict societal roles and norms, could be present in Western cases; however, the evidence is based on potential signs and indicators not stated testimony or interviews from the extremists, so a solid link cannot be established. Political and religious motivations were present in all of the assessed cases and coercion was not found in any of the cases. The findings of this chapter provide insight into the areas that should be addressed within a counter-narrative, specifically for secondary traumatization. Materials demonstrating victimized Muslims motivate the women, therefore the counter-radicalization programs and corresponding counter-narrative must address this issue.

Inspirational terrorist leaders greatly impact the radicalization process. The second chapter examined the characteristics of inspirational terrorist leaders with an analysis of two case studies: Anwar al-Awlaki and Abdullah Azzam. A review of the literature on leadership, terrorist and other types of leaders, established three characteristics for use in the case study analysis. These characteristics were: charisma, effective communication, and credibility or authority. Each leader was analyzed using these characteristics to determine the applicability and then two compare the findings from the two leaders. Both of the leaders conformed to the literature on charisma and credibility, but only al-Awlaki followed the literature on effective communication for a modern audience. The results had policy implications for targeted killings and counter-

violent extremism efforts. The findings indicated that these leaders can inspire individuals to radicalize to violent extremism long after they have died, and their messages can be distorted after their death; therefore, targeted killings likely will not stop their influence without an accompanying counter-messaging effort.

The final chapter assesses whether or not a government connection with a counter-radicalization program impacts the legitimacy of the program, and if the type of government has an impact on the legitimacy if a connection is evident. Three programs were selected – Quilliam, Dialogue Forum, and the Sakinah Campaign. These programs had different structures and were located in countries with varying types of government. The analysis results provided evidence that the credibility and legitimacy of counter-radicalization programs are negatively impacted by an evident government connection to the *messengers*, not necessarily a connection to the program itself. Also, the analysis confirmed that the type of government involved does impact the legitimacy if there is an *evident* connection with governments based in Islamic law maintaining greater legitimacy. These findings have direct implications for the structure of counter-radicalization efforts in the United States, some of which openly associate with the government.

The three chapters all provide evidence on a collective level that the terrorist message, conveyed through propaganda and communication, is a dominant factor in the radicalization process. The first chapter demonstrates that terrorist propaganda exhibiting victimized Muslims does have an impact in motivating individuals, and it also provides insight into the types of motivations that terrorists exploit. The chapter on inspirational leaders supplies information on how these leaders communicate and connect with the audience. This information can be used to improve the communication techniques for



counter-radicalization programs and to disrupt the terrorist leader's message. Finally, the chapter on program structure and messengers provides evidence that the actual messengers for a program should not be *clearly* connected to the government. The findings from each chapter provide a better understanding of specific aspects of radicalization and existing counter-radicalization programs that can be used to combat the terrorist message.

### *Limitations*

The research did have some limitations based on availability of information. This primarily applies to the first chapter focusing on female motivations and to some degree to the final chapter on counter-radicalization program links with the government. For the first chapter, the case study information for each woman was limited to open source research, and did not include interviews as many scholars have done with individual case studies. This was due to time and resource constraints. Also, the suicide bombing case study, Muriel Degauque, was limited to information from news interviews with her family and other materials published after her death, rather than first-hand testimony or interviews. This limitation was unavoidable given the nature of the case. The third chapter faced some information restrictions due to level of secrecy surrounding the program for the Dialogue Forum and due to the level of information control conducted by the government for the Sakinah Campaign. However, these limitations had minimal impact on the analysis.

### *Future Research*

In the future, research on radicalization should continue to look at the impact of inspirational leaders after they have been killed, particularly the impact of Anwar al-Awlaki. This paper included al-Awlaki in the discussion of inspirational leaders, but a study should be conducted after more time has passed to look back on the impact, or lack of impact, al-Awlaki has after his death. For example, will his materials continue to prompt individuals to act years after his death when his materials and cultural references are not as current?

Future research on inspirational leaders, female motivations and counter-radicalization program structure should be examined beyond violent Islamic extremism and compared to determine commonalities in the radicalization process across ideologies. Violent Islamic extremism is not the only form of violent extremism and is not the only form of violent extremism that is a threat to national security. The topics examined in the previous chapters would benefit from a comparison with other forms of violent extremism to determine if there are overlaps in the CVE efforts that can or should be taken and to further the understanding of radicalization more broadly. For example, what similarities and differences exist in the three identified leadership characteristics for single-issue extremist leaders and Islamic extremist leaders? What motivations prompt women to act in right-wing extremist groups?

### *Closing Thoughts*

In closing, the findings from this thesis and the proposed future research should be taken into consideration as policymakers consider new programs or improvements to

existing programs to counter radicalization. The United States has a formal counter-radicalization strategy and some programs directed at combatting radicalization to violent extremism, but they are relatively new and still developing. This thesis is not implying that the United States does not conduct counter-radicalization activities, but rather intends to further the study of radicalization. The goal is to contribute meaningful research and analysis that will help the United States develop more effective and successful programs based off of this enhanced understanding.

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### RELATED EXPERIENCE

Binera, Inc., Silver Spring, MD

**Risk Policy Analyst**

**August 2011 – Present**

ICF International, Washington, DC

**Analyst**

**January 2010 – July 2011**

International Terrorism Victim Expense Reimbursement Program

Office for Victims of Crime, Department of Justice

Fulbright Program – Institute of International Education

**English Teaching Assistant**

**2007**

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

**Research Assistant to Dr. Errol Henderson**

**2007**

Research Topic: Africa's Interstate Wars